

Faithful Father Abraham

by Joelee Chamberlain

A while back we talked about the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, didn't we? We talked about how God created everything and about Adam and Eve and about Noah and the Flood. Then we talked a little about Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. But there are so many interesting things in the Bible about Abraham that I thought that today we would talk just about Abraham. Would you like that?

All right, then. Well, Abraham was born about 400 years after Noah and the Flood. In fact, Noah was Abraham's great-great-great-grandfather. Abraham was called "Abram" at first, but later the Lord God changed his name to "Abraham." Also, his wife's name was "Sarai" at first, but later God changed her name to "Sarah". But just so that it won't be confusing, I'm just going to call them "Abraham" and "Sarah" all of the time, okay?

Well, at first Abraham lived in Ur, a city by the great, big Euphrates Rivers in what is now called Iraq. The people in Ur worshipped idols. But one day the Lord told Abraham, "You are to leave Ur and your family there. I'll show you where you are to go." Then the Lord said, "I am going to make a great nation out of you. I will bless you and lots of people will know about you. And you will be a blessing. And all the families of the whole world will be blessed because of you." And the Lord said to Abraham, "I will bless those that bless you and curse those who curse you."

Now for the Lord to bless someone means that the Lord God would do good things for them, but to curse someone means that the Lord would have bad things happen to them.

So Abraham left Ur as the Lord had told him to do. He took his wife Sarah and his father and his nephew Lot with him. (Abraham didn't have any children at that time.) Abraham traveled with them up the big Euphrates River and settled in a place called Haran up in Syria. After a while Abraham's father died, and then Abraham (who was then 75 years old) took his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot and all of his things and moved on down into the land of Canaan, into what we call the land of Israel.

Then the Lord appeared to Abraham and talked to him again. The Lord said, "I'm going to give all of this land to your descendants." ("Descendants" means someone's children or grandchildren or great-great-great-grandchildren.) So Abraham built an altar there to worship the Lord Who had talked to him. And Abraham moved to another place in the land of Canaan and built another altar there to the Lord.

That was the way things were done then. There weren't churches to go to. If someone wanted to worship the Lord, he would build an altar to the Lord and probably offer a sacrifice and pray. We aren't given a lot of details on this. But Abraham wanted to worship the Lord.

Anyway, Abraham moved again. Now, you might wonder why he was moving around so much now that he was in the land of Canaan where the Lord had told him to go. But, you see,

Abraham and Lot both had lots of herds -- sheep, cows, and the like. And these animals needed to have food to eat. So people with herds would move to where there was food for the animals to eat, grass and things like that. After a while they would move to where there was fresh grass and other food for their animals.

Well, after a while there came a famine in the land of Canaan. A famine is when there isn't enough food. What were Abraham and Lot and their animals and servants to do? Well, they moved down to the land of Egypt where there was plenty of food. Egypt doesn't get rain, but there is a great big river in Egypt. This river is called the Nile River, and the people in Egypt use the water from the Nile river to water their crops. So usually there was plenty of food in Egypt. So Abraham took his family and herds to Egypt.

When they got to Egypt, Abraham looked at his wife Sarah. Sarah was getting older, but she was still very beautiful, and Abraham was afraid that the Egyptians (who didn't worship the Lord God) might see the beautiful Sarah and want to marry her and might kill Abraham in order to marry Sarah! So Abraham said to his wife Sarah, "Please, Sarah, tell everyone that I am your brother. Then they won't want to kill me." So that's what Sarah did.

Well, the Egyptians saw Sarah and thought, "My, but she is beautiful!" And they told Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, about her, and they took Sarah to Pharaoh's house. Pharaoh gave Abraham lots of presents because of Sarah, but he didn't marry her, though he may have been thinking about it. But the Lord protected Sarah, and nobody did anything to her. And the Lord some way caused some bad things to happen to Pharaoh and his household, and this in some way let Pharaoh know that Sarah was actually Abraham's wife.

So the king said to Abraham, "Why did you say she was your sister? Why, I might have married her!" Then he gave Sarah back to Abraham. And he had Abraham and his family leave with all of his herds and the presents he had given him. And Abraham went back to the place in the land of Canaan where he had built the altar to the Lord and worshipped the Lord there.

Now, both Abraham and his nephew Lot were both very rich. They had lots of herds and servants and gold and silver. But they had so many herds that there just wasn't enough food for them all in one place. So their herdsmen began arguing with each other about the pastures, the places where grass and things grew for the herds to eat. And Abraham told Lot, "Please, let's not have arguing between us or between our herdsmen. We're relatives! There's lots of land around us, so please, you choose where you want to go. Then I'll go somewhere else."

So Lot looked around him. And he saw good pastures down in the valley near the Jordan River, so he chose that and went and lived down there near the city of Sodom.

Then the Lord spoke to Abraham again after Lot had left. The Lord said, "Look around you. Look all around you in all directions. I'm going to give all the land you see both to you and your descendants forever. And I'm going to have you have so many descendants that you won't be able to count them. Why, there will be so many that it will like trying to count all of the pieces of dust on the

ground! So get up and walk all through this land, because I'm going to give it to you." So Abraham moved his tent and lived up in the hills. And again he built an altar to the Lord. He still didn't have any children yet, though, even though he was getting older.

Now, there were 4 big kings from over near Ur where Abraham had lived when he was young. One of these kings was named Chedorlaomer. That's quite a name, isn't it?! Chedorlaomer! Well, some years before this, Chedorlaomer and the other 3 kings had come and conquered the cities in the land of Canaan and around the Jordan River. But from what I can figure, all they did to the people was tell them to send taxes to them every year. We're not given many details about it in the Bible, though. But whatever it was, the people in Canaan did it for 12 years. But then they stopped doing what those kings had told them to do. So after 2 more years, Chedorlaomer and the other 3 kings decided to do something about that. So they got their armies together and went over to the land around the Jordan River. They went fighting all the cities around there. Chedorlaomer and the other kings went fighting down one side of the Jordan River and into the cities in the wilderness beyond the river. Then they went fighting up around to the other side of the Jordan River. They fought the cities there. Now in those days each city had its own king. And the kings of 5 of the cities near the bottom of the Jordan River, including the king of Sodom where Lot lived, got their own armies together and tried to fight against Chedorlaomer and the other kings. But Chedorlaomer and the other 3 kings beat the 5 kings of the cities in Canaan. And Chedorlaomer and the other 3 kings took everything out of the cities to keep. And besides the food and riches, they took some of the people. They were going to take them back with them as slaves. And guess who one of those prisoners was? Yes, one of the prisoners they took was Lot, Abraham's nephew!

Well, someone who had escaped from Chedorlaomer got away and went and told Abraham what had happened and that Lot had been taken as a prisoner. When Abraham heard this about his nephew Lot, he got his own army together, over 300 men whom he had trained as soldiers. And Abraham had 2 friends who also had armies of their own, and they joined Abraham. And off they went after Chedorlaomer and the other 3 kings! They chased them for miles until they caught up with them. Then they waited until nighttime and attacked them and beat them, killing lots of them, and chased the rest until they were far away! Then Abraham brought back all the stuff that Chedorlaomer and the other 3 kings had stolen, and he brought back all the people that had been taken to be slaves, and he got his nephew Lot back again! Whew!!

As Abraham and his 2 friends and their armies were heading back home again, the king of Sodom came out to meet him. Also, a man named Melchizedek brought them out food and something to drink. We don't know anything about Melchizedek except that he was the king of the city of Salem (later called Jeru-salem; Jerusalem) and that he was a priest of God. Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Melchizedek said, "Blessed be Abraham by the most high God who made heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God for giving Abraham's enemies to him."

Then Abraham gave Melchizedek one tenth of everything he had taken from Chedorlaomer and the other 3 kings.

Well, then the king of Sodom talked to Abraham. He said, "Give me the people who had been

taken from our cities to be slaves, and you keep all of the riches you got from those kings."

But Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I swear by the most high God, the One who made heaven and earth, that I won't take anything, not even a shoelace of your things. Otherwise you might say that you had made me rich." You see, Abraham knew that it was the Lord Who made him rich. And he didn't want the king of Sodom, who was a bad man, to be able to say that he had made Abraham rich.

Then Abraham said, "I'll just have the food that my soldiers have eaten. My two friends, though, can take their share of the things we took from those kings."

Then after that the Lord spoke to Abraham again. The Lord said, "Don't be afraid, Abraham. I will protect you and reward you."

But Abraham said, "Oh, Lord God, what will you give me? I don't have any children! You haven't given me any children, and my most important servant will inherit all I have." (To inherit means that when a person dies their things will belong to someone else, usually to their children. But Abraham was 85 years old at that time, and he still didn't have any children.)

But the Lord said to Abraham, "No, he won't inherit what you have. You will have a son of your own who will inherit it."

And the Lord took Abraham out and said to him, "Look up at the sky and try to count all those stars if you can. You'll have descendants that will be so many you can't count them, either." And Abraham believed what the Lord said to him; and this believing, this faith was counted to him for righteousness. (To be righteous means that we are right, we're good, we're right with how we are with God.)

And the Lord said to Abraham, "I am the Lord who brought you up out of Ur to this land to inherit this land."

And Abraham said to the Lord, "Lord, how can I know I will inherit it?"

The Lord said, "Take a young cow and a young goat and a turtledove and a pigeon."

So Abraham did. He took the animals and prepared them as a sacrifice. And Abraham stood there and chased away any birds that came down on them. Then as the sun was going down, the Lord said to Abraham, "You can know for sure that your descendants will be strangers in a land that isn't theirs and will serve them. And they will have a hard time for 400 years. But I will judge the nation that they will serve, and then your descendants will leave that land with lots of riches. But you will live to be an old man in peace. But in the fourth generation they will come back here again."

And then when the sun had gone down and it was dark, the Lord appeared as a smoking furnace and a burning torch and walked between the sacrifices. This sounds strange to us, but in those

days, when people made a solemn promise, they would often have a sacrifice and do that to show that they really meant what they said.

And the same day the Lord made a covenant, a solemn promise, to Abraham, and the Lord said, "I will give all of this land to your descendants. All of the land clear up to the Euphrates River."

Now Sarah couldn't have children herself. And Sarah said, "The Lord has kept me from being able to have any children myself." So Sarah had an idea. She said to Abraham, "I have a maid, a slave girl who helps me. You marry her and have children by her. And then it will be like they are my children." (In those days often men had more than one wife, though that wasn't the way God liked it.)

And Abraham paid attention to Sarah and married her maid. The maid's name was Hagar. After a while Hagar knew she was going to have a baby, and she began looking down on her mistress Sarah. You see, Hagar thought she was better than Sarah because she could have a baby but Sarah couldn't. This made Sarah unhappy and mad, and she said to Abraham, "I let you marry my maid, and now that she's going to have a baby, she thinks she's better than I am."

So Abraham said to Sarah, "Look here. Hagar is your maid, your slave girl. So you do what you want to her." And Sarah became very stern with Hagar, and this made Hagar unhappy. So Hagar ran away.

Hagar ran away and stopped by a fountain of water in the wilderness. And there the angel of the Lord came to her. The angel of the Lord said, "Hagar, Sarah's maid, where did you come from, and where are you going to go?" (But of course, he already knew! It's like when your mother or father asks you questions that they already know, about something you've done, so that you will talk to them about it.)

And Hagar said, "I'm running away from my mistress Sarah."

And the angel of the Lord said to Hagar, "Go back to your mistress and do whatever she tells you." In other words, he told Hagar to be obedient and respectful to her mistress Sarah.

And the angel of the Lord also said to Hagar, "I will give you lots of descendants, so many you won't be able to count them."

And the angel of the Lord said, "You are going to have a baby boy, and you will name him Ishmael, because the Lord has heard of your troubles." (Ishmael is a Hebrew word that means "God hears.")

And the angel of the Lord also said, "Your son will be a man who will live on his own."

So Hagar went back to Sarah as the angel of the Lord had told her to do. And after a little while Hagar and Abraham's baby was born, and Abraham called him Ishmael as the angel of the Lord had said. Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born.

Well, 13 years went by. Ishmael was 13 years old, a young teenager, and Abraham was 99 years old. And then one day the Lord appeared to Abraham again. And the Lord said to Abraham, "I will make a covenant, an agreement, with you."

And God said, "You will be the father of nations, and some of your descendants will be kings. And I'm going to change your name." Remember that I told you that Abraham had at first been called "Abram?" Well, this is when his name was changed by God to "Abraham." Abraham means "Father of a great multitude", that is, Abraham would be the ancestor (the father) of lots and lots of people.

God told Abraham, "I'm going to make a covenant between me and you and your children forever that I will be a God to you. And I will give you and your descendants this land of Canaan forever."

And God said to Abraham, "I'm going to change your wife's name, too. It has been Sarai, but she will now be named Sarah. And I will bless Sarah, and I will give you a son from her, and she will be the mother of nations, and some of her descendants will be kings."

Well, Sarah was 89 years old by then and was way older than when a woman could have babies. So Abraham just couldn't believe this. He fell on his face and laughed! And he said to himself, "Can a man who's nearly 100 years old and a woman who's nearly 90 have babies?!"

And Abraham remembered his and Hagar's 13 year old son Ishmael. And Abraham said to the Lord, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before you!" You see, Abraham loved Ishmael and had been thinking all along that Ishmael would inherit all of the promises and blessings that the Lord had given to Abraham.

But God told Abraham, "Your wife Sarah will really have a son for you, and you will name him Isaac. I will have my covenant with him and his descendants forever. But I've also heard you about Ishmael, and I will bless him, too. But he'll be a different big nation. But my covenant will be with Isaac. Sarah will have him born to her next year." And then God stopped talking with Abraham. This son was to be the son to inherit all of the special promises that the Lord had given to Abraham. He would be spoken of as the son of promise.

Now, Abraham lived in a tent. (People then often lived in nice, big tents, ones they could stand up in.) And a little while later Abraham was sitting in the doorway of his tent, and he looked up, and he saw 3 strangers. So he got up and ran over to meet them and bowed to them, which was the polite thing to do. Abraham said to them, "Please, sirs, stop here a while. I'll bring you some water to wash your feet, and you can rest under the tree." You see, people just wore sandals then, and there weren't any sidewalks, so people's feet would get all dusty. It was polite to offer them water to wash their feet, and Abraham was being polite to these strangers.

Then Abraham said to the 3 strangers, "And I will bring you some food. After that you can continue on your journey."

The strangers said, "Yes, you can do that for us."

So Abraham hurried into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick! Make some bread!" (It was probably sort of like pancakes.) And then Abraham ran out to where his herds were and said to one of his servants, "Quick! Fix some meat!"

And Abraham took some butter and milk and the bread and the meat and gave it to the strangers as they were resting under the tree, and Abraham stood by them as they ate. But Sarah stayed in the tent and listened to what they were going to talk about. You see, in those days it wasn't good manners for the women come out and talk with strange men.

And one of the strangers said to Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?"

And Abraham said, "In the tent."

And the stranger said to Abraham, "I'm going to make you and your wife to be like people younger than you are, people who can have children, and Sarah your wife will have a son."

Remember, Abraham and Sarah were very old, too old to have children. Well, Sarah, back in the tent heard what the stranger had said, and she laughed to herself, thinking, "What?! Are we old people going to be like we're young again!"

But now we find out who that first stranger was! He was the Lord!! Yes, the Lord Himself and two angels had come down from heaven, just looking like 3 men, and they were visiting with Abraham!

And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying she was too old to have a baby? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Yes, I'm going to make you both like you're younger, and Sarah will have a son."

Well, this scared Sarah! She had only laughed to herself and talked to herself, not out loud! She didn't come out of the tent, but she said, "Oh, I didn't laugh!" But the Lord said, "Yes, you did!"

After this the 3 of them got up and started walking again. They were up in the mountains with Abraham, but they started walking toward Sodom where Abraham's nephew Lot lived, and Abraham very politely walked a little way with them.

Then the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I'm going to do? After all, I'm going to make a great nation out of his descendants, and all the nations in the world will be blessed through him. I know he will live the way he should and have his family live in a godly way, too."

Then the Lord said to Abraham, "The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are very wicked. I'm going to go see if they are really as wicked as I've heard. I'll find out." (Of course, again, He already knew this!)

Now, the other two men, who were really angels, started walking toward Sodom, but the Lord stayed and talked with Abraham a while longer. But Abraham got worried about the city of Sodom. After all, his nephew Lot lived there, and there were lots of other people living there. He knew that the Lord was thinking of destroying the city and the people in it. So Abraham said to the Lord, "Oh, maybe there are 50 righteous people living there! Would you kill the righteous people along with the wicked ones? You are very fair. Surely you wouldn't do that?!" (Remember, "righteous" means people who are doing good, doing what's right, living godly lives.)

And the Lord said, "If I find 50 righteous people in Sodom, I won't destroy the city because of them"

Then Abraham said, "Well, maybe there are 5 less than 50 righteous people. Would you still destroy the city because it was 5 less?"

And the Lord said, "I won't destroy it if I find 45."

Then Abraham spoke to the Lord again, "Well, maybe there are just 40 righteous people there."

And the Lord said, "I won't destroy it if there are 40."

And Abraham kept trying to bargain with the Lord! He said, "Oh, please, Lord, don't be mad at me. Maybe there are just 30 righteous people in Sodom."

And the Lord said, "I won't do it because of the 30."

And Abraham spoke again and said, "What if there are only 20 there?"

And the Lord said, "Then I won't destroy it because of the 20."

And Abraham finally said, "Oh, please don't get mad at me. I will just ask one more time. Maybe there are only 10 righteous people in Sodom."

And the Lord said, "Then I won't destroy it because of the 10."

And the Lord walked off as soon as they stopped talking. And Abraham went back to his tent.

Well, the two angels went on toward the city of Sodom and got there as evening was coming. Lot was sitting there in the gate of the city and saw them. Of course, he thought they were just men; he didn't know they were angels. And Lot got up and went to meet them and bowed to them and said, "Look, sirs, please come and stay at my house tonight. Then you can get up early in the morning and go on with your journey."

But the angels said, "No, we'll just spend the night here on the street."

But Lot kept asking them, and finally they went home with him. He fixed them a meal, and they ate it. However, Sodom was full of very bad people, and before bedtime, all of the men of the city came around Lot's house and shouted to Lot, "Where are the men who came to your house. You bring them out; we're going to hurt them!" Can you imagine people acting like that?!

Well, Lot went outside and closed the door behind him and said to the men of the city, "Please, brothers, don't be so wicked."

But the men of the city began saying, "Huh! Who do you think you are! We'll hurt you!" And they began shoving toward Lot. But the angels reached out and grabbed Lot and pulled him back into the house and slammed the door! Then the angels made it so that the bad men of the city couldn't see where the door was, so the men went back home.

Well, you can see that the city of Sodom was really as wicked as the Lord had heard, can't you?! And there weren't even 10 good men in the whole city! But the Bible says that Lot was a righteous man and was unhappy every day because the people of Sodom were so wicked.

So the angels said to Lot, "Do you have any other family here? If you have, take them out of this city. Because the Lord has sent us to destroy the city because they are so very wicked."

So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law saying, "Get up! Leave this place! The Lord is going to destroy this city!"

But they didn't believe Lot and it just seemed to them as if he were making a joke.

When morning came, the angels told Lot to hurry. They said, "Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Otherwise you might be destroyed with this wicked city!"

Well, Lot wasn't hurrying, but the Lord was merciful to him, so finally the one angel grabbed Lot and his wife by the hand and the other angel grabbed Lot's two daughters by the hand, and just took them out of the city!

And one of the angels said to Lot, "Run for your lives! Don't look back and don't stay here on the flat ground! Escape to the mountain, or you'll get killed!"

So Lot and his wife and daughters started running, and as the sun was coming up the Lord sent fire and brimstone from heaven onto the very wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and a couple of other cities there and destroyed them with their very wicked people.

Now, the angel had told Lot and his family not to look back as they ran away, hadn't he? But Lot's wife disobeyed the angel and looked back, and she was turned into a pillar of salt. But Lot and his two daughters got away.

Well, remember that the day before that the Lord had visited Abraham with the two angels, hadn't He? And the Lord had told Abraham that He was going to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Abraham had talked to the Lord and the Lord had promised not to destroy Sodom if there were 10 righteous men in the city. You remember all that, don't you?

Well, that morning after Lot escaped from Sodom, Abraham got up early to see if the Lord had found even ten righteous men in the whole city of Sodom or whether He had destroyed it. And Abraham looked out toward the valley where Sodom and Gomorrah had been, but all he could see was a lot of smoke where they had been. So Abraham knew that there hadn't been even 10 righteous men in Sodom. But, because of Abraham, God had sent Lot out of Sodom before He destroyed it.

Well, about a year later a very happy thing happened to Abraham and his wife Sarah. The Lord kept His promise to them (God always keeps His promises, doesn't He?!). Yes, the Lord kept his promise, and old Sarah had a baby boy!! Remember, the Lord had told them that she would have a baby boy, hadn't He? And they were so happy!! Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears about this will laugh, too! Who would have thought that Abraham and I, who are so old, could have a baby boy!?" And Abraham named the baby boy "Isaac", as the Lord had told them to. "Isaac" is a Hebrew word that means "laughter". They had laughed earlier when the Lord had told them that Sarah would have a baby boy, but now they were laughing because they were so happy with their baby! And Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old when Isaac, the son of promise, was born.

Well, when Isaac was a few years old, starting to be a big boy, Abraham had a big party because of him. But, now, remember that Abraham had another son, Hagar's son Ishmael. You remember that, don't you? Well, Ishmael was 14 years old when Isaac was born. And when there was the party, Ishmael was probably about 18; he was a young man. And at the party Sarah saw Ishmael making fun of little Isaac at his special party. This made Sarah mad!!

So Sarah said to Abraham, "Get rid of this slave and her son! No son of a slave is going to inherit with my son Isaac!"

Now this made Abraham very sad. He loved his son Ishmael. But God said to Abraham, "Don't be sad because of the boy and his mother. Do what Sarah says, because Isaac is the one who's going to make you a great nation."

And God said to Abraham, "But I'll make Ishmael, the slave's son, a nation, too, because he is your son."

So Abraham did what Sarah wanted. He got up early in the morning and gave Hagar some food and water, and then Hagar and her son Ishmael left. After a while the water was gone, and she didn't know what to do. So she had Ishmael lie down under a bush in the shade and she went over a ways away and sat down. She was afraid Ishmael would die, and she started to cry.

Now, of course, God sees and knows everything, doesn't He?! But the Bible makes a point of telling us that God heard Ishmael's voice. I don't know if Ishmael were just talking or crying or what, but God heard him, and angel of God spoke to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What's wrong, Hagar? Don't be afraid, for God has heard the boy's voice."

And He said, "Get up and take him by the hand. I'm going to make a great nation out of him."

Then God let Hagar see that there was actually a well of water there. So Hagar went and filled her container with water and gave Ishmael a drink of water. And God was with the young man, Ishmael, and Ishmael grew up, and they lived there in the wilderness. And Ishmael learned to use a bow and arrow very well. Later his mother Hagar got him a wife from Egypt, the land that she herself was from. And Ishmael had 12 sons and became a big nation, just like God had promised to Abraham.

So now Ishmael was gone, and Abraham and Sarah had their son Isaac, their son of promise, the one who would inherit all of the Lord's blessings to Abraham. And of course they loved Isaac very much. Now, we're supposed to love the Lord God more than anything else or anyone else, aren't we? And we're supposed to obey God, aren't we? Well, one day God decided to test Abraham. God said to Abraham, "Abraham, you take your son Isaac, your son that you love, and you go where I'm going to tell you, and you offer him up as a burnt offering there."

Now, Abraham knew that the Lord had promised that He would make a great nation out of Isaac and that Isaac would have lots and lots of descendants, but at that time Isaac wasn't even married yet. And the Bible tells us that Abraham trusted the Lord to keep this promise. God always keeps His promises, doesn't He? Well, it tells us later in the Bible that Abraham knew that even if he were to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, the Lord could make Isaac alive again in order to keep His promise.

So Abraham got up early in the morning, put a saddle on his donkey, and he and two of his young men servants and Isaac all started out. They had wood for the burnt offering with them, and they started out to go to the place that God had told him to go. They traveled for 3 days until they came to the place. Think how hard that was for Abraham! But he trusted the Lord.

When they got there, Abraham said to the two young men, "You wait here, and Isaac and I will go over there and worship the Lord. Then we will come back to you."

So Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and had Isaac carry it. We don't know how old Isaac was then, but he was old enough to be strong enough to carry a big load of wood. Then Abraham took his knife, and he took a container with some hot coals in it to start a fire and they started off.

Isaac said, "Father."

Abraham said, "I am here, my son."

Isaac said, "Look, we have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Abraham said, "My son, God will provide a lamb for a burnt offering."

So they walked on. They came to the place that God had told him about, and Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood on it. Then he tied up Isaac and put him on the wood. Then Abraham took his knife ready to kill his son, but the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven. The angel of the Lord said, "Abraham! Abraham! "

Abraham said, "Here I am."

Then the angel of the Lord said, "Don't hurt the boy or do anything to him!" Whesh!

And the angel of the Lord said, "Now I know that you fear God, since you were even going to give your dear son to me!"

Then Abraham looked behind him, and there was a ram, a sheep, caught by his horns in the bushes. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a sacrifice to the Lord instead of Isaac.

Now, we know that the Lord would never really have anyone kill someone as a sacrifice to Him, don't we? But Abraham wasn't sure just what to do except that he loved the Lord God more than anything else in the world and he wanted to obey God. And, again, Abraham trusted that the Lord would raise Isaac from the dead in order to keep His promises to him.

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven and repeated His earlier promises to Abraham. He said, "Because you have done this, been ready to sacrifice you son for me, I will bless you and give you many, many descendants. There will be as many as the stars in the sky or the pieces of sand on the seashore. And all nations will be blessed because of you, because you have obeyed what I said."

So Abraham and Isaac went back to where the two young men were waiting for them, and they all got up and went back home.

Later, when Abraham's wife Sarah was 127 years old, very old, she died. And Abraham didn't own any land in which to bury her. So he bought a piece of land with a cave in it, and he buried her in the cave. That is the way people often did things then, burying their loved ones in caves. This cave is called the cave of Machpelah.

Three years after Sarah died, Abraham sent a trusted servant up to where Abraham had some relatives. He had the servant go there to find a wife for Isaac. Isaac was then 40 years old. The servant went with ten camels loaded with food for the way and with gifts and there were men with him. They went up and found Abraham's relatives. One of them had a beautiful young daughter named Rebekah, and Rebekah agreed to go back with the servant to marry Isaac.

Later Abraham himself married again to a woman named Keturah. Abraham and Keturah had

six sons. But Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, was the one who was to inherit the promises of God. So when Abraham got very old, he gave Keturah's six sons presents, and they went away and lived over near where their half-brother Ishmael was living.

Well, Isaac and Rebekah were married. They didn't have any children for 20 years, but finally they had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. We can figure from the ages given in the Bible that Abraham lived until Jacob and Esau, were about 15 years old. Think how nice it was for him to see his grandchildren! And they were the children of his son of promise, Isaac.

Then when Abraham was 175 years old, he died. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah with his wife Sarah.

Now, God had given promises to both Abraham and Isaac, hadn't He? And we find out later that Jacob would be the one to inherit these promises of God from them.

Now, the Jews call Abraham their father since they are all descended from him. Yes, the people that we call the children of Israel or Jews are all descended from Abraham and also from Isaac and Jacob. And that includes King David and his great-great-great-granddaughter Mary, who was the mother of Jesus! So Jesus is a Jew! Yes, Jesus is a great-great-great-great-grandson of Abraham!! Did you know that?! (Of course, Jesus is also God.)

And the Bible also says in the New Testament that anyone who believes on Jesus is like a child of Abraham. So Abraham is not only the father of all of the Jews, but He is also like the father of many, many people from all over the world, of all believers everywhere, isn't he? Everyone who has ever believed in Jesus, that He died on the cross for our sins, taking our punishment and rose from the dead and is still alive now in heaven is like a child of Abraham! So he really is the father of many nations, isn't he?

And that is what the Bible means when it tells us that in Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Yes, the Jews have done great things that are good for everyone like be scientists or invent machines or medicines, but there is even a bigger way that the whole world is blessed in Abraham, and that is in his great-great-great-grandson the Lord Jesus Christ, isn't it? Because there could be no bigger blessing than to have our sins forgiven and to be able someday to be with the Lord forever. Right? And we can only get that biggest blessing by believing in Jesus, can't we? So Jesus is the biggest blessing to the whole world that there could ever be, isn't He?!

Now, Abraham had great faith in the Lord God; he believed Him. Remember, we said earlier that the Bible tells us that Abraham believed God, and that God said that this belief was what made Abraham righteous. So how can we be made righteous, be made right in our relationship to God? Why, the same way that Abraham was made righteous, by believing God! But, again, what exactly is it that we are to believe, to trust God about, that can make us right with God, make us righteous? Well, God tells us in the Bible that the only way to be right with Him, to be righteous, and be able to be with Him someday is by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, the Bible says that Jesus, the Son of God, died to take the punishment for our sins, and that He was buried, and that three days later He

came alive again, rose from the dead. If we believe this and trust in Him to save us, then He will keep His promise to save us from our sins. And someday we can be with the Lord God forever. Won't that be wonderful?! I've trusted in Jesus to make me righteous, and I know I'll be with Him forever.

So today we have talked about faithful father Abraham, haven't we? And where in the Bible do we read the stories about Abraham? Yes, in the very first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings. I hope you've enjoyed this. I have!