

“A Journey of Faith with the Patriarchs”

Christians are a “people of faith.” But what does that mean? How does it work in life?

- the roots of faith are planted deep in Genesis, and so a study of the patriarchs of faith will help us understand the nature of faith & our walk with God

Hi! I’m Brian Cummins. Thanks for joining me for what I believe will be a most interesting and instructive Bible exploration.

In this series we’ll examine the Genesis records about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob & Joseph in “*A Journey of Faith with the Patriarchs*”.

We begin with Abraham as he embraced the call of God:

#1 – “Embracing the Call of God”

A. INTRODUCTION: the Biblical Context

The final 39 chapters of Genesis are firmly grounded in the context of the first 11 chapters.

Those 11 chapters provide us with many essential truths about the cosmic context in which we find ourselves, about humanity’s beginnings & tragic failings, and about our Creator God who remains passionately active in the whole scene.

- Genesis 1 – 11 especially raises the **SIN** problem – man’s greatest & most crucial core issue; as we turn a biblical corner at chapter 12 we are introduced to the **SOLUTION**

- Abraham is the beginning of God’s solution to this problem – through this one man would come the Redeemer who would reconcile humanity back to God again

- so the final parag. of chap. 11 places Abraham’s call to follow God against a **cosmic background**: the same God who calls creation into being is the same God who now calls the community of faith into being

- let me quote Walter Brueggemann, to whom I am deeply indebted for many insights into the Book of Genesis:

*“The one who calls the worlds into being now makes a **second call**... The purpose of the call is to fashion an **alternative community** in creation gone awry, to embody in human history the power of the blessing. It is the hope of God that in this new family all human history can be brought to the unity and harmony intended by the one who calls.”*

- Brueggemann tells us that the clear break between chap. 11 & 12 is “perhaps the most important structural break in the Old Testament... It distinguishes between... the history of the **curse** and the history of the **blessing**.”

- in the first 11 chapters God’s solemn **curse** is pronounced **5 times** on sin & sinners

- but when we come to chap. 12 & Abraham, God pronounces a **5-fold blessing** on Abraham – God begins His great work of calling people to a faith relationship with Him, marked by blessing

- and there’s another contrast with the earlier section of Genesis

- compare the 5 self-assertions of Yahweh spoken here to Abram, with the destructive self-assertions of Adam & Eve

- Gen. 3:10-13 – Adam declared: “I was afraid” – “I was naked” – “I hid” – “I ate it” – and Eve concurs: “I ate”

- Gen. 12:2-3 – God begins the **reversal** of man’s situation:

- “I will make you” – “I will bless you” – “I will make your name great” – “I will bless those...” – “I will curse [those]...”

- but notice the **context** of God’s call: 11:30 “Now Sarai was **barren**; she had no children.”
 - this is more than just a description – this is a *powerful metaphor* for **humanity’s** condition at the end of the first 11 chapters of Genesis history
 - “But barrenness [as Brueggemann points out] is not only the *condition* of hopeless humanity. The marvel of biblical faith is that **barrenness** is the *arena of God’s life-giving action*.”
 - ...the God of the Bible, Yahweh, doesn’t depend on anyone or anything; he starts with nothing – he creates *ex nihilo* – he works well (we can say, best!) in barren situations
- George Muller said, “Faith does not operate in the realm of the **possible**. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. *Faith begins where man’s power ends*.”
- so the opening of chap. 12 is a paradigm for **resurrection**

Gen 12:1-2

Now the Lord had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you. ²I will make you a great nation...

- Paul points to this truth in Rom. 4:17 – “As it is written: ‘I have made you [Abraham] a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God *who gives life to the dead* and calls things that are not as though they were.”
- Abraham’s example is encouraging to all of us as we face apparently impossible challenges/situations, because this is precisely the kind of situation where the **God of resurrection** wants to work!
 - God does not call the **qualified**; He qualifies the **called**