

GOD'S TRAINING: Abraham & Sarah, 1st of 6, part 1 of 2, 12 pgs

In the OT **three people** are specially noted: **Abraham** is referred to as *the friend of God*, **Jas.2:23; 2 Chr.20:7; Isa.41:8** ; *the man of faith*, **Gal.3:6-9** .

INTRODUCTION to the first stage,^a illustrated by **The Impossible Dream** (repurposed)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBNwmPiMZbQ>

How does this song relate to our study of God's Training?

Abram and Sarai came from a pagan culture with a lot of baggage.^b *They knew practically nothing about the Living God,*^c **GST p.127** so they had to learn about him and his ways from scratch. They had to be **trained out of** [deconstructed from] their native mentality and understanding of the world, their **default setting**,^d and **retrained** [reconstructed and recalibrated] **to the spiritual and supernatural nature of God and his ways**. This essay is about their journey out of the darkness of ignorance into the unknown country of the light. **This Training in Sonship - To Believe God, Trust Him, and Obey Him is a Necessary Journey all of us Who Come to Christ are Obligated to Take** [keep this in the forefront of your mind and it will change your life]. It took them a long time and much adversity, but they did finally come to accept God's providence [see Both-And]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzrhqjzQCi4> **Day by Day**, a hymn about God's providence. Throughout their **training** God was patient with them and never once criticized them. They are both highly commended in the NT for their **faith** manifested **by their obedience**, **Jas.2:21-24**. Their responses to God's promises have become examples to us as we are being trained.

In the movie, **THE WIZARD OF OZ**, Dorothy was carried away from her home in Kansas by a tornado to the land of Oz. **The story is about her journey to find a way home**. The good witch, Glenda, suggests she travel on the yellow brick road to **the Emerald city** where the Wizard of the land of Oz might be able to help her return home. After many adventures and dangers, Dorothy and the friends she made along the way arrive at the city. But the Wizard's hot air balloon accidentally lifts off stranding Dorothy in OZ. Glenda reappears and tells Dorothy she always had the power to return to Kansas. The scarecrow asks, *Why didn't you tell her before?* **Because she wouldn't have believed me!** **She had to learn it for herself**. So it is for us who set out to follow Christ. **Our journey to "the Celestial city" is most important for it is on that road we learn to trust God as Abraham and Sarah did.**

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a. The 4 Stages indicate the spiritual state or status of a person. **STAGE 1** represents mankind after the Fall, the natural human being. The **quest of the singer**, though noble and his steadfast determination to try with all his might to do what is right and good, admirable, cannot be achieved because he is a man of this world depending upon his own efforts, self-discipline, and resources. He longs for significance, an important role on a worldwide scale, but is frustrated in his attempts. Nevertheless he takes comfort in the fact that alone he tried, suffered, and persevered in his quest. A person who has been **supernaturally born anew** is indwelt by the Spirit of God, **stage 2**, and is not meant to operate the same way as he used to. **Stage 3** designates one who is functioning on the spiritual plane - walking in, being led by, filled with, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. *For the*

children of God are **those who are led by the Spirit of God** , **Rom.8:14** [word order reversed]

b. Abram and Sarai were reared in a kind of pagan superstitious/supernatural environment ... your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor [Terah's father] , lived beyond the Euphrates River and **worshiped other gods** , **Jos.24:2** . **They functioned as naturalists**, but viewed things through a distorted supernatural framework. Although they didn't perceive "the gods" as working out a plan, they had a better understanding of the nature of the world than we who grew up in a technologically advanced secularized society do, **TS p.64**.

c. Likewise, by the time of Christ, the **Jews had so turned from God** that only a minority accepted their OT prophesied Messiah. And we are amply warned that the end of our own era will be very much the same . Therefore speaking of the end of our age , Jesus said ... when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? **Lk.18:8** . Jesus expressly connects **the time of Noah** with the time of his second coming, **GST p.127-128** . As it was in the days of Noah ... in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage [engaged in the normality of life] , up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming [return] of the Son of Man ... Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come, **Mt.24:37-42** .

d. Abram's default setting was: **pragmatic** - outcome is the primary consideration of any action; **naturalistic** - only natural phenomena exist with only a vague notion of the supernatural; **materialistic** - this life is all there is so what is important is what we can enjoy now and the things we can accumulate; **rationalistic** - human reason is the sole authority for opinion and action; **humanistic** - begins with Man alone to understand and explain everything.

At this point in his life he had little experience with God and his supernatural ways. He was in the process of **being trained to think in supernatural categories** and **God never once criticizes him**. God had patience with him and we should too. **I refuse to excoriate or condemn him** or anyone else for that matter, during their training while being taught a whole new way of living and thinking. He didn't know that **God was training him to see things from a supernatural perspective**. It's an inherently slow process, but we do see his learning and changing over time.

It would be worth discussing certain **cultural norms of OT times** that God didn't address until Christ came and the NC was instituted [see **APDX 3 & 4, p.12-16**].

THE BIBLICAL THEME

God uses all things to accomplish his purposes in the world and for the benefit of his people and you who love God **become his agents for that very purpose**. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters [God's goal is to have many children like Jesus], **Rom.8:28-29; Eph.1:5, 11; Heb.12:4-6** (Phillips).

In all that he designs or allows us to experience, **his chief concern is that our attitudes become consistent with those of his son**, Jesus Christ. He was subject [deferred, yielded] to the authority

of his parents as he was growing up, even though at that time it seemed to run counter to his Heavenly Father's business. **Because of this response**, he grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man, **Lk.2:49, 51-52**.

During the days of his life on earth ... **Jesus was heard because of his reverent submission** . God's Son though he was, **he learned obedience from what he suffered** [his temptation in the desert and ordeal on the cross] . Jesus came into the world as a baby and **matured** in the same way we all do yet **without reacting to adversity or giving in to temptation**. He learned obedience by self-denial^e and so never accumulated a **backlog of sin** like the rest of us have. Therefore, **by being perfected in this way, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him** , **Heb.5:7-9** .

Jesus ... now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by God's grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone. For **it was fitting for him ... in bringing many sons to glory** (stage 4), **to make the pioneer** [author, captain] **of their salvation perfect through sufferings** . For indeed he who makes holy and those being made holy all have the same origin, and so he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, **2:9-11**.

e. There are several aspects to **self-denial**: refusing to give in to the temptation to do what you want; **Deference**: yielding oneself to or acquiesce to the expectations or wishes of another, **Lk.2:41-52**; **Humility**: submission to the will of another, attitude consistent with and being content with a low position of a servant (deacon), **Phil.2:5-9**; **Lk.22:42**; **Meekness**: non-assertive of one's self-interests, non-retaliation for personal damages, accepting adversity and animosity without resisting or complaining; **Forgiveness**: letting go of resentment and anger, and giving up any claim to be compensated for the hurt or loss suffered.

Let Christ himself be your example as to what your attitude should be ... he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience ... Phil.2:5-8 (Phillips).

Meet your Instructors

Through our faith , Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and **we confidently and joyfully look forward to** [expect] **sharing God's glory** (stage 4). We can rejoice, too, when we run into **problems and trials** [adversity] , for we know that **they help us develop endurance** . And endurance develops **strength of character** , and character strengthens our **confident hope** [expectation] **of salvation** . And **this hope will not lead to disappointment** . For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love, **Rom.5:1-5 ; Jas.1:2-4, 12, 17-18**.

Welcome to Training Camp: The Journey Begins apdx 1

Abram was a Chaldean (**Acts 7:4**) from Mesopotamia (**v.2**) whom God called away from his people (**v.3**), his inheritance, his rationalism, his gods, and his native land, to a new place, a new way of thinking, and a new allegiance to the Living God. **SO IT IS WITH EVERY ONE OF US TO WHOM CHRIST MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN**. [Stop and consider what this means for you.] God promised to bless Abram and his descendants, **Gen.12: 1-3**. He was 75 and Sarai 65 when they set out

for the land of Canaan as God led, but land was not initially included with the promise, **v.1**. *As they traveled through that land* with his nephew, Lot and their entourage - extended families, possessions, animals, servants, and hired hands, **v.4-5**, the Lord appeared to Abram and clarified his promise: to your offspring I will give this land, **v.7**. But Abram himself is not mentioned as a recipient. As a matter of fact he himself would not inherit any of the land and neither would his immediate descendants, Isaac and Jacob. Despite saying that they would, **13:14-17; 15: 7, 18-21**, Abram and all his descendants became nomads in a foreign country and never did receive *the things that were promised*,^f **Heb.11:11-13, 39; Acts 7:5-8**.

f. *at the covenant of circumcision, all the land that you see, I will give to you and to your descendants permanently ... walk through the length and breadth of the land, because I will give it to you, 13:14-17*

However it becomes clear that *the land promise was intended for the descendants of Abraham after they were enslaved in Egypt and had become a nation*. It served as a type of heaven for all believers, the true nation of God's people, to set their hearts on, *they were longing for a better land—a heavenly one, Heb.11:16. they did not receive what was promised, because God had planned something better for us, namely, that they would not reach that goal (stage 4) apart from us, 39-40*.

FAMINE

Now there was a severe famine in the land [of Canaan], so Abram [and family] went down to Egypt [which was unaffected by the drought, the usual cause of famines] to live for a while, Gen. 12:10. As Abram was about to enter Egypt, he was afraid ^{apdx 2} and worried that because his wife *[now over 65]* was so beautiful, Pharaoh would have him murdered and take her for himself. So he said to her *say you are my sister* so I may live and prosper *[this deception was practiced throughout their wanderings 20:13], 11-16*. Previously Abram had encounters with God at least twice where he was assured that he would have many descendants (**v.2 & 7**), and Abram believed the promises, but *under the stress of worry and fear*, this man, early in his training, either lost sight of or never considered the logical **implications** of those promises [**GT #3, p8; #6, p.3**]. Fear and worry tend to do that.

Pharaoh Takes Sarai

Sure enough Pharaoh took Sarai into his palace *[normally a permanent situation]* and treated Abram well so that he became much wealthier, **v.16**. This was what his attention was given to and it took awhile. But what of Sarai? Did he think about her welfare? **Abram was willing to sacrifice ^g her to save himself!** *This instigated his first lesson in trusting the Lord to supernaturally keep his promises. the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, v.17 ...* So God forced Pharaoh to return Sarai to Abram and he sent them out of his territory with all their belongings, **17-20**. *Abram had become very wealthy ^{apdx 3} in livestock, silver, and gold, Gen.13:2*.

g. *There are two situations where because of the fear of man and the fear of death, Abraham sacri-*

ficed his wife, needlessly and foolishly jeopardizing her whole future. Neither of these is understandable given the number of **fighting men** Abram could call upon in his defense. Jesus did the opposite when he sacrificed himself for us. Yet **God used the chain of events Abraham initiated to test Sarah and train her also in the way of sonship**. She learned from the first abduction by Pharaoh that God had her back, and many years later Abimelech took her and God confirmed and reinforced that he was continuing to watch over her. Submission [deference] to her husband at these times earned her a prominent place among godly women in the Scriptures, **1 Pt.3:1-6**.

God Moves in a Mysterious Way His Wonders to Perform

This incident raises questions that continue to crop up in our lives. **Why did God let this chain of events play out before stepping in?** Answers have already be given above under God's Training Program & Meet your Instructors. God was also foreshadowing his plans for the future and expanding our frame of reference. The famine that moved Abram to travel to Egypt and Pharaoh's abduction of Sarai forecasts the famine that led Jacob's tribe to seek refuge in Egypt where they settled down, were enslaved, and were eventually delivered by God. This is **recapitulated** in the life of Jesus, *Out of Egypt have I called my son*, **Mt.2:15**. **The events of their lives were meant for our instruction**.

*The promises were spoken to Abraham **and to his seed** ... meaning one person, **Christ** [the ultimate referent], **Gal.3:16** ... If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, **v.29** [neither do we have any reason to fear for those promises guarantee our place in glory, **stage 4**]*

ABRAM & LOT SEPARATE

So Abram and Lot with their **extended households** moved about until the land could not support both groups because their possessions were so great. *And quarreling arose between their herders*. Abram proposed to Lot that they part company to avoid further disputes. *Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom [thus God brought about Abram's final separation from his old life]. (Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.) [This statement is a harbinger of what was to come] The LORD said to Abram ... walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it **to you and your descendants**, forever. So Abram pitched his tents near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, **Gen.13:5-18**.*

ABRAM RESCUES LOT

An incident occurred when an alliance of ... *four kings [attacked] five ... The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food ... They also carried off Abram's nephew, Lot, and his possessions ... Abram ... called out the **318 trained fighting**^h **men born in his household** [not employees but servants who were part of an extended family/household, see **15:2-3**] and went in pursuit [accompanied by 3 of his neighbors and their men, **14:24**] ... During the night **Abram** [divided] **his men** to attack them^h and he routed them ... He recovered all the goods and brought back Lot, his possessions, together with the women and the other people ... **Gen.14:8-16**.*

h. Presumably men **trained in different forms of self-defense or combat** and in the use of different

weapons. This was the bronze age so their weapons would be axes with bronze heads, bronze knives, swords, and bronze tipped arrows & spears. It is reasonable to assume that these men, in addition to their regular duties, had been **under coaches** who trained them in the use of weapons and combat skills and exercised them to build up their stamina and strength.

There is nothing wrong with the application of wisdom, strategy, or tactics to a given situation. This is **using the imaginative and creative mind God gave us** to plan and figure things out. It is not wrong in itself. But it is if one's attitude excludes God from the process, depending on those things in and of themselves to accomplish a task or achieve desired results. That is humanism.

Encounter With Melchizedek

... **Melchizedek** ⁱ king of **Salem** [a shortened form for Jerusalem], **priest of the most high God**, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him saying, *Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth ... His name first means **king of righteousness**, then **king of Salem, that is, king of peace**; **Heb.7:1-2; Gen.14:18-20**.*

... Christ became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek, **Heb.5:9-10** ... You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek, **v.6; Ps.110:4**.

God said to Christ, You are my Son; today [**Christ's resurrection**] I have become your Father, **Ps.2:7-9; Rom.1:3-4**

I. Semitic name, from the godly line of Noah's son, **Shem**, **Gen.9:26**, who fathered **Eber**, **10:21; Lk.3:35**, **from which the name "Hebrew" was derived**. Melchizedek prefigured and was a type of Christ. *only the high priest entered the inner room [of the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement] ... The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. **This is an illustration for the present time**, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper ... When **Christ came as high priest** of the good things that are now already here, **he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle** [the true heavenly sanctuary] ... he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus procuring eternal redemption, **Heb.9:7-12**.*

we see Jesus ... now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God **he might taste death for everyone**. In **bringing many sons and daughters to glory (stage 4)**, **it was fitting that God ... should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered**. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says, *I will declare your name to my brothers ... Here am I, and the children God has given me*. Since the children have flesh and blood, **he too shared in their humanity** so that by his death he might **break the power** of him who holds the power of death—that is, **the devil** and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For ... he helps Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made

*like them, fully human in every way, in order **that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest** in service to God, and **that he might make atonement for the sins of the people**. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted, **Heb.2:9-18**.*

The promises further clarified

Once again the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision which began with the words **Do not be afraid**. Since Abram remained childless, **he proposed a solution** that was within the promises God had given him – that his household servant, **Eliezer**, be his heir. But God replied, *this man will **not** be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir ... Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness [which means that **God counted or construed his believing as obedience**, see **Gen.12:4; Heb.11:8**], **Gen.15:1-6***. There God **cut a covenant** with Abram promising to give his descendants the land of Canaan and specified it's bounds, **18-21**. He also **clarified the misconception** that Abram might be killed *You will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age, **v.15***. God had been patiently, step-by-step **training** Abram and Sarai to think super-naturally and **to trust him** to accomplish what he promised.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding [cleverness, devices, schemes or human techniques as you have in the past]. In all your ways submit to [acknowledge] him, and he will [direct] make your paths straight, [prepare the way ahead], **Prov.3:5-6; 2 Cor.12:7-10**. [**This is not an assurance that everything will go well**, but that God would go with him and accomplish his plans.]*

Abram had been living in Canaan for 10 years

*Sarai [who was no less a humanist than Abram] ... had borne him no children [a condition usually taken as a curse, but here **it was to serve God's purposes**]. [She **proposed a solution** that was also within the scope of God's promises - that Abram sleep with [metaphorical euphemism] her [Egyptian] slave, **Hagar**; ^j [thinking] **perhaps I can build a family through her** ... Sarai ... gave Hagar to her husband to be his wife. He slept with her, and after she conceived, Hagar looked down on [variously translated: despised; became haughty or proud and arrogant toward; became contemptuous of] her mistress. Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away ... The angel of the LORD came to her in the desert [and comforted her] saying Return to your mistress and submit to her authority ^{apdx 4} ... I will give you more descendants than you can count. He told her to name her child **Ishmael** [**God hears**], **Gen.16:1-10**. Abram was 86 when the child was born.*

j. This episode reveals **an obvious point of tension** that comes with having multiple wives, and resulted in some nasty consequences. Sarai blamed Abram for this, as if he intentionally didn't get her pregnant. It is significant that Abram has a part in fulfilling God's promises to him, but God is working out his plans for the Hebrew nation and beyond. **The Bible doesn't teach determinism**. We make our own choices which have consequences for which we are accountable. See my essay, **Both-And**.

When Abram was 99 [and Ishmael was 13],

The Lord appeared to Abram to confirm his covenant with him and his descendants. He promised to give them *the whole land of Canaan as an everlasting possession* [AFS chap.9], **Gen.17:1-8**. God also changed his name from Abram, “exalted father,” to Abraham, “father of a multitude” to emphasize his promise to give him children despite his old age (v.5) and Sarai’s history of barrenness, **17:15-19**. *I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her, v.16*. God also changed Sarai’s name to Sarah because she was to be the mother of nations and kings. At this **Abraham laughed, v.17** [this seems to be an emotional response as his humanism clashed with his desire to have a son]. *He pleaded, If only Ishmael might live under your blessing*. God reiterated, *Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call his name Isaac* [he laughs], **18-19**.

THE THREE VISITORS

Once again the Lord visited Abraham and promised that Sarah would bear a son the next year **21:2** [this prophetic announcement and its fulfillment is one of many clues to God’s divinity]. So **Sarah laughed** to herself as she thought, *after I am worn out [90, and no longer physically capable of conception] and my lord is old [humanism + emotions], will I now have this pleasure? Then the LORD said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh ... [so did Abraham, 17:17]? Is anything too hard for the LORD? [the answer to this question implies a universal principle] I will return to you ... next year, and Sarah will have a son*. Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, *I did not laugh [typical reaction when caught lying - denial and back-pedaling]. But he said, Yes, you did [God’s knowing what she was thinking is another clue to his deity] ...* **Gen.18:12-15**

Properly teaching his children and governing his household was a qualification for God to fulfill his promises to Abraham. *I have chosen Abraham so that he may command his children and his household after him* [see **GT#6, p.7**] **to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just**. *Then [If they do] he will give [do for] Abraham what [everything] he promised him [implying that if they don’t, which was the case, he won’t apdx 5],* **Gen.18:19; 1 Pt.3:6, 13-14; 2 Thes.3:13; Rom.12:17**. Therefore **all commands and promises to us are conditional** because they are founded upon this general principle ... *God will not be made a fool (is not mocked, will not be ridiculed, treated with contempt) For a person will reap what he sows, Gal.6:7.*

Then the LORD said, The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ... **Gen.18:20**. Once Abraham found out that the reason for their visit was to exact judgment upon them, **he interceded^k for the cities** because Lot and his family lived in that area, **Gen.13:12**. His visitors agreed that they would spare them if they found 10 righteous people there. They didn’t so they led Lot, his wife [whom God slew as they were leaving], and two daughters out [Lot left without his wealth and possessions] and destroyed both cities.

k. This reveals that **God has determined to include us in working out his plans**. Remember **Mordecai’s reply to Esther’s objection** to going to king Xerxes without being summoned to expose Haman’s plot for exterminating the Jews? *Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place [ie, God will bring deliverance another way], but you and your*

father's family will perish. [see GT#4, p.2-3, 5-6] And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? Est.4:13-15. [see Gen.50:20 above. What do you think would have happened if Abraham had refused to sacrifice Isaac? ^{Apdx 1}]

Partnership: There have long been questions among believers regarding how prayer can be significant if God has already planned what he intends to accomplish and how he will proceed. The scriptural answer is that God has determined to work together with his people by their prayers and choices to accomplish what he has planned. NT passages particularly refer to sharing in the suffering of others and to persecution in bringing the Gospel to them, **2 Cor.1:5, 7, 11; Rom.15:30; Col.4:12; Phil.1:19.** Nevertheless it doesn't make sense **not** to include the prayers of the saints with witnessing. There are plenty of OT passages that illustrate our joint effort with God in prayer: **Jas.5:16-18; Jer.29:10-14; Dan.9:1-19.** The NT speaks to this in terms of Christians working together and cooperating with God in achieving his goals: **Mk.16:19-20; 1 Cor.3:7-9; 2 Cor.5:19- 6:1; 1 Thes.3:2.**

Abimelech takes Sarah

*[You'd think that by this point, Abraham's experiences with God would have converted him into a supernaturalist, but Noooo!] Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev [a large desert] ... in Gerar, He said of his wife, She is my sister [this deliberate misleading is the second time Abraham strayed outside the revelation he had received and **unnecessarily set into motion a series of events.** Once again God allows circumstances to unfold before stepping in.] Then Abimelech [a Philistine] king of Gerar ... took her [Sarah must have retained her **beauty** ^{apdx 6} into her 90s. Considering women and slaves as **chattel** was the common mentality for men in those days and characteristic of a misuse of power by monarchs].*

*But God came to Abimelech in a dream ... and said, You are as good as dead because the woman you have taken is married. Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he said, Lord, will you destroy an innocent [righteous] nation? Did he not say to me, She is my sister, and **didn't she also say, He is my brother?** I have done this [What, snatch people for your own pleasure?] with a clear conscience and clean hands. Then God said to him ... Not so fast! I have kept you from sinning against me ... I did not LET you touch her [divine superintendence]. Now return the man's wife ... and he will pray for you and you will live [a command coupled with a promise]. But if you do not return her, you and all who belong to you will die [warning coupled with a consequence]*
Gen.20:1-7

Abimelech questions Abraham

*Abimelech said to Abraham, **What have you done to us? How have I wronged you** that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done [a **scathing rebuke** from a pagan king]. When asked for the reason for the deception, Abraham replied, I assumed [wrongly as it turns out], there is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife [once again **he had been moved by irrational fear.** According to God's promises it was not possible for Abraham to be killed]. Besides, she really is my half-sister ... [a technicality to justify the deception. Once again Abraham reveals that he is still a rationalist]; and she became my wife. And when **the gods** [language to accommodate the*

pagan Abimelech] had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, **This is how you can show kindness to me** [Just how did Abraham show kindness to her?]: **Everywhere we go, say of me, He is my brother, 9-13**

Then Abimelech gave sheep and cattle and slaves to Abraham [Once again Abraham leaves richer than he came in.], and returned Sarah to him. And he said, My land is before you; live wherever you like. To Sarah he said, I am giving **your brother** a thousand shekels of silver to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated [for her part in this deception, **because she was obeying her husband**]. Then Abraham prayed, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his female slaves. For the LORD had kept all the women in Abimelech's household from conceiving because of Sarah, **14-18.**

the birth of Isaac

When Abraham was 100, Isaac was born as the child of promise with whom God intended to continue the covenant he made with Abraham. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, supernaturally came descendants as numerous as the stars, **Heb.11:11-12**

Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away

But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, **Get rid of that slave woman and her son**, for he will never share in the **inheritance**¹ with my son. **The matter distressed Abraham greatly** because it concerned his son. [Abraham had raised this boy as his son for 14 years and now he finds out that he must send him away. **This is a major test of his obedience**] God said to him ... Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned ... Early the next morning Abraham [an expression indicating his immediate compliance] ... sent Hagar off with the boy. They wandered in the Desert of Beersheba where God cared for them, **Gen.21:9-14.**

I. God's plan is to use this episode **to illustrate a fundamental principle for us**, see complete argument on **the incompatibility of Law and Gospel**, the Abraham/Sarah/Hagar triangle, **BAM, p.261-268.**

Abraham sacrifices Isaac

Now when the child reached adolescence [about 13], **God tested Abraham** by commanding: take your only son, **Isaac**,^m whom you love [several days journey away] ... and sacrifice him as a burnt offering ... as Abraham took the knife to slay his son, the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, Do not lay a hand on the boy ... **Now I know that you fear God** ... [on two previous occasions, Abraham's fear was for his own life contrary to God's promise to him, but **now he was afraid because he finally understood the implication that failure to obey** would jeopardize everything he was promised, **Gen.18:19.** ^{apdx 3} It is significant that love for and fear of a superior are both expressed by obedience.] **Gen.22:2, 10-12.**

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had **embraced the**

promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son [though Ishmael was firstborn], even though God had said to him, It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. **Abraham reasoned** that God could even raise the dead [**This is the first time Abraham thought in SUPERNATURAL categories, nothing is too hard for the Lord**], and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from **death**. ^{apdx 7} [With this reasoning, Abraham demonstrated that he had finally been converted from being a pragmatist; naturalist; rationalist; and humanist to a full-blown **super-naturalist**], **Heb.11:17-19**.

When God made his promise to Abraham ... he swore ... saying, Surely I will bless you greatly and multiply your descendants abundantly. And so **by persevering, Abraham inherited the promise** ... and the oath serves as a confirmation ... **God wanted to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise that his purpose was unchangeable**, and so he intervened with an oath, so that we who have found refuge in him may find strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us, **stage 4** ... **We have this hope** as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain [into the true heavenly sanctuary] where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. **Heb.6:13-20; Gen. 22:15-18**

m. Apparently Abraham had all night to think about this. And for the three days and nights in the company of his son and 2 servants (**Gen.22:3-4**) it had to weigh on his mind. Did they travel, make camp, and eat in silence? Let us not minimize **the opportunity for fear and worry to once again dominate** Abraham's thoughts and erode his determination.

EPILOGUE

Sarah had no more children and died at 127, **Gen.23:1**. *The Lord had blessed Abraham in every way, 24:1*. At 140 he married his concubine and fathered 6 sons by her, **25:1; 1 Chron.1:32**. Abraham lived to be 175, **Gen.25:7**. [see Is There a Future for National Israel? **p.3-5**]

Christ the True and Better (Lyric Video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcl6WSNVcHM>

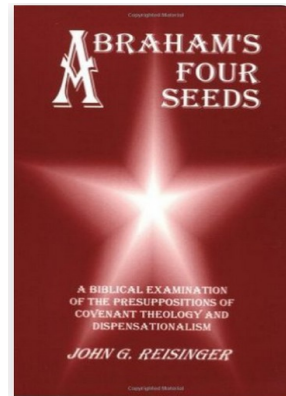
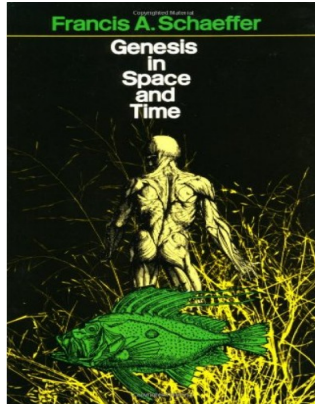
This has been an introduction to **the 4 stages or dimensions of life**: (1) the physical (natural); (2) the regenerate (born again); (3) the spiritual (supernatural); (4) the eternal. [*The Father*] rescued us from the domain of darkness [stage 1] and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves [stage 2] **Col.1:13**

Those who are in [the realm of] the flesh cannot please God [stage 1 or 2] **Rom.8:8** ... we who are not walking according to the flesh, but [living in harmony with] the Spirit [stage 3] **v.4** . This concludes the life-study framework for Abraham & Sarah. The next essay, **Beyond Abraham**, takes us into **STAGE 3, the New Era of True Spirituality & The Supernatural Christian Life**.

I recommend the following books for further study:

Genesis in Space and Time **GST** by Francis A. Schaeffer, 1972, 167 pages,
a discussion on the Flow of Biblical History;

Abraham's Four Seeds AFS by John G. Reisinger, 1998, 144 pages,
a biblical examination of the presuppositions of Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism



Now join me in Beyond Abraham, the final leg of this fantastic voyage into the NT where the promises to him and his descendants are fulfilled to Christians in **Stage 4**.