

Sunday School Notes 23 Feb 2020: Abraham, God's traveller (Genesis 12)

There are certain people who are born to explore. Think of Marco Polo, David Livingstone, Bear Grylls to mention just a few well known ones.

Perhaps the first explorer was Abram! He came originally from a town called Ur – a settled and secure brick city along the northern reaches of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, in present-day Iraq. Excavations have discovered it was a wealthy trading river port in his time. For some unknown reason, however, his father (Terah) moved the family to another town, Haran, which was further north and further west.

Despite the fact that he worshipped idols amid other idol-worshippers (Jos 24:2) Abram became aware of God. And at some stage God spoke to him telling him to move on, even though his father chose to remain in Haran.

And so Abram's adventure began. He set off not knowing exactly where he was going or why! Imagine the comments from the neighbours: "Oh, where are you off to? You don't know? So why are you going? Because this voice in your head tells you do to so?! You are crazy." (The same kinds of comments that Noah's community must have made to him!) But Abram knew God was real and he and his wife and his nephew, Lot, packed up their camels, marshalled their servants and set off. (Interestingly we don't hear complaints from Abram's wife, Sarai, or from Lot. They must have realised that Abram's God was real.)

Eventually they came to a land which God promised to Abram's offspring. The only problem was that Abram had no children and it seemed unlikely that he ever would! Despite this, he held on to the promise from God that his offspring would be like the stars in the sky (Gen 15:5) And 25 years after leaving Haran, Abram's only son, Isaac, was born.

We must remember that Abram had not been a perfect human being in those 25 years. Far from it! Driven by drought down to Egypt, he had lied saying that his wife, Sarai, was his sister so that his life would be spared. He had questioned God's wisdom in deciding to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah – two evil towns. He had doubted that he would ever have a son (Gen 17:17).

But in all these events and through all sorts of hardships, Abraham's faith evolved into a tremendous trust. He realised God was worth relying on. And that is why Abraham's name is so respected. He really trusted God through thick and thin and has been called a 'friend of God' (2 Chron 20:10).

This faith or trust meant that Abraham could allow his nephew, Lot, to choose the best land, knowing that God would also provide for him and Sarah. It meant that he could rely on God to protect Lot's family in Sodom and Gomorrah. Later Abraham was even prepared to offer up his only son if that was what God wanted – he knew that he could trust God.

At the end of his life, although he was wealthy in herds, Abraham didn't own any land, except for a burial place for his wife. He had never again lived in a settled town or community. But he regarded the sacrifices as worth it – he had become God's friend.

What an adventure – a long journey, an unusual life. Yet it was a secure life because it was based on God. Who knows what adventures God has in store for us if we also trust him.

“Think about Abraham.” Scripture says, ‘Abraham believed God. God accepted Abraham because he believed.’ (Gal 3:10) His faith made him right with God. And we can be equally sure that if we trust God, he will bring us into his peace also.