

Session 10: The Abraham Cycle

Key texts: 11:27-25:11

Announcements

→ Upcoming EquipMEN† events:

- *Fight Club: A one day seminar for men, May 1 (\$25) Sign up tonight!*
- *Exponential2:2 applications now available. Due on 5/12!*

The Abraham Cycle (11:27-25:11)

Fire tries iron, and temptation tries a just man. Adversities do not make a man frail. They show what sort of man he is. (Thomas à Kempis)

When God gives a promise, He always tries our faith. Just as the roots of trees take firmer hold when they are contending with the wind, so faith takes a firmer hold when it struggles with adverse appearances. (Robert Murray McCheyne)

The Cyclic Structure of Abraham Narrative¹⁹ (...and what we can *learn* from it)

- A. Genealogy of Terah (11:27-32)
- B. Promise of a nation and start of Abraham's spiritual odyssey (12:1-9)
- C. *I AM* protects and enriches deceitful Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (12:10-20)
- D. Abraham chooses land by faith; Lot chooses Sodom by sight (13:1-18)
- E. Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot in war (14:1-24)
- F. Land covenant with Abraham and annunciation of Ishmael (15:1-16:16)
[Land covenant ratification in 15:18-20]
- F'. Seed covenant with Abraham and annunciation of Isaac (17:1-18:15)
[Seed covenant ratification in 17:4-7]
- E'. Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot in prayer (18:16-33)
- D'. Lot flees doomed Sodom and settles in Moab (19:1-38)
- C'. God protects and enriches deceitful Abraham and Sarah and Philistia (20:1-18)
- B'. Birth of Isaac and climax of Abraham's spiritual odyssey (21:1-22:19)
- A'. Genealogy of Nahor (22:20-24)

The passage spanning 23:1-25:18 serves as a *janus*—a passage looking both backward and forward, connecting the Abraham Cycle to the Jacob Cycle (25:19-35:22)

What can be learned from such an obviously organized structure?

¹⁹ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 311-12.

What *is* the tension in the narrative? What do all of the stories in these fourteen chapters *portray*? What's the *question* that the author is posing to the reader?

The plot is driven by:

Abraham must trust God in spite of:

- a _____ (11:30)
- _____ in the Promised Land (12:10)
- _____ in a hostile land (12:10-12)
- the _____ of his _____ in pagan kings' harems (12:14-16)
- an ungrateful nephew who _____ for himself (13:1-13)
- _____ against mighty _____ (14:1-16)
- _____ between rival _____ and their children (16:1-16)
- his _____ (17:17)
- God's command to _____ the _____ from whom the promised _____ were to come (22:1-10)
- impending _____ with the promise unfulfilled (25:7-8)

The common thread (or *threat*)?:

Where does Abraham's faith fail? Where are the places where it looks like the answer to the question, "Will Abraham believe God?" is probably *no*?

Where is Abraham's faithfulness emphasized and asserted?

(B.)

Gen. 12:1: "**Go** from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

Gen. 12:3: "...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(B'.)

Gen. 22:2: "**Go** to the land of Moriah...on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

Gen. 22:18: "...in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

(F.)

Gen. 15:6: "And [Abraham] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

The Climax of the Abraham Cycle: The Sacrifice of Isaac (22:1-19)

What can we learn from the Abraham Cycle for our own faithful living?

Suggested reading for next week's seminar discussion

Scripture to study: Genesis 25-35

Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, pp. 349-479 (skim)

Joyce G. Baldwin, *The Message of Genesis 12-50*, pp. 103-152 (skim)

Worship: *There Is a Redeemer* Melody Green

There is a redeemer, Jesus, God's own son,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.

Jesus my redeemer, Name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, oh, for sinners slain.

Thank you, oh my Father, for giving us your Son,
And leaving your Spirit, 'til the work on earth is done.

When I stand in glory, I will see his face,
And there I'll serve my king forever, in that holy place.

Thank you, oh my father, for giving us your Son,
And leaving your Spirit, 'til the work on earth is done.