

The Family of Abraham - Part 1—Introduction

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[0 : 00] Welcome back. Today I am going to be starting something new. What I'm going to be starting is a history of Abraham's family. This will take us from chapter 11 of the book of Genesis until the very end in chapter 50.

The bulk of the book of Genesis is given over to this history. And I want us to look at this in some detail to see within this huge cast of characters what the parts they all play are, how their stories are related together, and what is the deepest significance of what's taking place.

When we read the story of Abraham, often we can neglect a lot of what's taking place, even when we try and recover certain figures. We're recovering them as individuals, as detached figures that will help us relate to someone within this story.

Maybe it's a woman who's neglected within the story, and we want some more female characters, and so we'll focus upon the female characters. But in a way that isolates them from the larger fabric of what's taking place.

In the same way, if we read the story of Abraham just as an example of faith, and not as the story of a family beginning to take place, we will miss a lot of what is taking place there too.

[1 : 14] What I want us to look at then is the story of Genesis as the story of a family, and their densely interconnected roles. The ways that their lives ricochet off each other, and the implications of certain people's actions for many people down the line.

What we see within the story of Genesis is that actions have consequences. Have consequences for the person who does those actions, but also have consequences for a great host of other people, who unbeknownst to them are affected by what they have done.

And I want us to look at this in some detail, to reflect upon each character that comes up, and think about what part they play within the story. So you read through the story, you can often focus very narrowly upon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, this sort of line of the covenant that's going down, and we ignore everyone else.

We kind of push everyone else to the side. But yet if you look at the sides, you will see a great deal of the point is this broader peripheral, these other figures that are part of the story.

It's like a great soap opera in some respects. All these different characters with entangled lives. And it's playing out over generations. Over a number of generations, where we see the repercussions of original actions playing out.

[2 : 37] over the history that follows. Read this story and you'll see a great number of people. Terah, Haran, Nahor, the brothers and the father of Abram.

Abram and Sarai. Milcah, the wife of Nahor. Bethuel. We have characters like Laban and others who are within that line of the family.

Lot, who's the son of Haran. We have a host of other people then coming into the story, like Sarai and Hagar. And then we have Ishmael and Isaac.

And then we have Jacob later on, and Esau and Rebekah. And we have a whole host of people coming along. As we go through the story, we'll see that each part, each person within the story, has some part to play.

And they all help to teach us something about the deeper significance of what is taking place. This is a story about human lives and the repercussions of actions and God's work in the tangled mess of one particular family.

[3 : 41] A family through whom all the nations of the world would be blessed. It's a remarkable story. It's a story of people who are lost. It's a story of death reversed.

It's a story of recovery. It's a story of tragedy. And it's a story of life and hope and love and all these other things that make a compelling narrative.

This is what we find within the book of Genesis. It's the stuff of human life. And it's something that is given very close and subtle attention. The details are very fine.

But once you pay attention to the details, if you pay attention closely, you'll see a lot is taking place that you will miss if you're not looking. The stories of actions that have ramifications.

Now, we often think about our lives as detached individual things. We think about our self-conception is such that we detach ourselves from the movement of one generation to another.

[4 : 42] So we don't think enough about ourselves in terms of the ramifications of the actions of our grandparents and how those play out in our lives. But yet, the book of Genesis pays attention to that sort of thing.

And as we read this story, we'll be tracing some of those threads and thinking about what is taking place within this broader tapestry of human relationships. What is God doing?

What is the life of this family to teach us? How can we learn about who we are? Also thinking about relationships and how the actions of one person can have a whole set of ramifications and implications for other people that they never could have foreseen.

And how those ramifications that can be very negative can be reversed in certain respects. How God can recover what was lost. How there can be turnarounds in history.

How we can learn from our history as a means of restoring others. As a means of bringing life where there was once death. Now as you read this story, you'll see a lot of these elements take some attention to discover.

[5 : 52] They don't just appear on the surface of the page, but they are there. And so I want us over the next few months to dig into this text in great depth and discover some of the things that lie there.

Some of the things that you may not have seen before, but when you see, it will help you to understand a lot else that is taking place. The family is the point of this story.

And typology is part of how we'll understand how this point plays out. Typology shows us the relationship between events and the relationships between persons.

And typology in association with a family story helps us to see the lines of family influence. How families and their patterns of life play out over generations.

And how that can anticipate events that are yet far distant future. We'll come to, at the end of our discussion of Genesis, we'll be exploring texts later on that Genesis has anticipated.

[6 : 51] The story of David, for instance, where these themes of Genesis start to percolate again. You start to see figures that are reminiscent of figures that you've met earlier on in the book of Genesis, in the book of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel.

You'll also see events that anticipate later events of Exodus, for instance, or the whole history of Israel being played out in various ways within this book of Genesis.

And so I want you to join me, if you'd like, to explore this in detail, to discover something about what God has to teach us from this particular set of texts as a connected web of stories.

And as we pull each thread and we see how it's connected, I hope we'll begin to see that these threads are part of a dense, interwoven tapestry, a beautiful work, a work that's rich with symbolism, that's rich with revelation, and that will help us to understand something about who we are, how the world works, and how God is acting within creation and in history.

Thank you very much for listening. Lord willing, I'll be back again tomorrow. If you have any questions that you'd like to ask on the story of Abraham or about some other things, please leave them in my Curious Cat account.

[8 : 08] As I go through this series, I'll be doing other videos alongside it, so it won't just be this, but I'd also like, if people have questions about the story of Abraham, send them to me on my Curious Cat account and I'll try and answer them in the course of my videos.

Thank you very much for listening. Lord willing, I'll be back again tomorrow. God bless.