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ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Class #1

Get Thee Out of Thy Country

Reading: Genesis 12

Well brethren and sisters, it certainly is great to be with you again around the Word of God, and you know, we've learned a lot since we've been here, and even again this morning, I was quite astonished, I never realized that Len could read, but there you are, wonders will never cease and you learn a lot!

Well, we're here this morning to deal with the wonderful character of Abraham, and this particular study of Abraham, brethren and sisters, is one of the finest studies that I've ever done expositively, because we know so much about him, because of the numerous references we have of this man in the New Testament scriptures; there's a lot of the scripture based on the life and the history of Abraham. And of course, the only fact that's going to be against us, is our time factor, but we'll do our best to point out some of the glorious features of this record, of this wonderful man Abraham.

Just a word about him before we begin, of what he's called in the scripture. You know how that it's James in his second chapter and verse 23, that he speaks about one of the titles by which Abraham was known. It says in James 2:23, 'And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.' Now, you know, it's true, he was called the friend of God because you find that recorded, and we won't turn these references up brethren and sisters, you find that recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:7 where he's first given that title in the lips of Jehoshaphat when he prayed to God and he mentioned Abraham as being God's friend. You'll find it again in the Isaiah 41:8, where again the prophet Isaiah makes the point, that Abraham was known as the 'friend of God'. Have you ever wondered why that is? You might say he was a friend of God, well, so he was, but God had a lot of other friends too! But why is it that Abraham is singled out with that title, the friend of God?

Well, you know, we have in the bible the definition of a friend, and that's in the 15th chapter of the gospel of John, you have a look at this! and you'll know why Abraham

was called the friend of God. Jesus Himself laid down this definition of friendship and what He would do with a person who was His friend. So, in John 15:14 Jesus said, 'You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you', now that is exactly what God did with Abraham, and it was because of that definition there, given by the Lord Jesus Christ, that Abraham was called the 'friend of God', because Jesus said, 'I've called you friends for all things I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you'. Now, you come back to Genesis chapter 18, and God pleaded with Abraham as a friend, and this is where he got his title from.

With that definition given by our Lord Jesus Christ, we come back to Genesis 18 and we read in verses 17 and 18, 'And Yahweh said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do: Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Yahweh, to do justice and judgment; that Yahweh may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.' And so as the angels went down to Sodom representing the mighty God of Israel, God says, 'I won't hide anything from Abraham' as Jesus said, 'ye are my friends; henceforth, all that my Father has told me, I'll tell you' that's exactly what God did with Abraham. Why? Because I know him, that he will command his children and his household to do what I say. So there it is, there's your definition given by the LORD and there's your title to Abraham, because that's exactly how God treated him; He told him of His future intentions as you would tell your friend of your future intentions.

That's one of the titles by which Abraham was named. He had a couple of others; it was the nations, it was the heathen that called him the 'Hebrew'. He was first called a 'Hebrew' by the Canaanites; we won't turn that reference up but in Genesis 14:13 the Canaanites called him 'the Hebrew', Abraham the Hebrew and the word 'Hebrew' of course, means 'the crosser over'. And it was Joshua that noted that 'your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood', and you know, brethren and sisters, to cross the Euphrates when it's in flood, is some feat! And if you don't believe that, one of these days when you're in Adelaide, I'll show you some slides that I took when I was travelling to Ur of the Chaldees in a train, and the only thing above the water, was the railway line, and you could not see any land, north, south, east or west, anywhere! but water. All you could see was two railway tracks; from horizon to horizon and that was the Euphrates in flood. And when Abraham crossed that river, the Canaanites stood in awe of him, and said 'he is a crosser over' and that's what the world should see in us! It's an astonishing thing to see people leave the world and come into the truth! People leave behind their former way of life; it's an astonishing thing and the world should look at us and say, 'Hey, they've crossed over!' There shouldn't be a shimmer of a doubt that we're different, and the Canaanites, (it wasn't God or a fellow Israelite), it was the Canaanites that called him a 'Hebrew' first of all, because they recognized in Abraham, one that had crossed over.

He had another title in the scriptures, he's called 'the father of the faithful' in Romans 4

and verse 14 and 16, and you know what, brethren and sisters, it is the Lord Jesus Christ that said, 'call no man your father on the earth' and here we've got Paul calling Abraham 'the father of the faithful', but when we get to Genesis 17, I'm going to show you on what basis Paul called him 'the father' and you'll be absolutely thrilled to see that, and you will then know, that Jesus' commandment was not transgressed by Paul, when he called Abraham 'the father of the faith'. And you'll see that in a very wonderful fashion, why Abraham was called that; but we'll defer that until chapter 17.

Now, there's only one other thing I want to say, before we plunge into this story, and that is, in Hebrews 11 we have this said concerning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I want to explain why this is said to set the background for this wonderful man's life. Speaking of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we read in the 11th chapter of Hebrews and verse 16 concerning their faith. The apostle says, 'but now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city'. God is not ashamed to be called their God, now the word 'called' in the Greek there, really means 'surnamed'; God is not ashamed to be surnamed their God. Now, you know what happens with a surname; you marry a little girl, her name is Jones and yours is Brown, she becomes a Brown. And she's not ashamed to bear your name because she loves and respects you. That's what the word in the Greek means, and so God took into His own family, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He was not ashamed to put His name as their surname, and so we repeat through the scripture. 'I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob', you ask yourself the question, why did he stop at those three? Why don't we have David attached to that? Joshua or whatever? or the prophets? Why those three? Why would He surname Himself on those three? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Is it because He would have been ashamed to be the God of David? Of course not! But you see, brethren and sisters, when you look at those three men, there is epitomized the whole purpose of God in those three men. Why? Because you see, Abraham is called 'the father of the faithful', Isaac is called 'his only begotten son' and when you come to Jacob, and this is extraordinary! When you come to Jacob he had 12 sons; and when God told him to multiply and out of him would come a multitude of nations, for the first time in the scripture, the Hebrew uses a different word for him than it does concerning Abraham and Isaac when they were told they would be a multitude of people. And in your leisure if you would like to look at Genesis 28:3, you'll notice that the margin and the translators picked that up, and the word in the Hebrew reads as if it was 'a multitude of fishes', as fishes swarm in the sea, so this word is used of Jacob. And so, what you find is this, there's the plan and purpose of God in a nutshell! in three men; the father, the son and the ecclesia surnamed. He stopped there! because there it all is, and He's not ashamed to be surnamed upon them, because there is epitomized His whole purpose. He is the Father, Jesus Christ is the only begotten, and we are 'the swarm' taken out of all nations, the sea of nations, to form the ecclesia. And so that name stops with those three men because there is the plan and purpose of God epitomized. Now I hope that just illustrates to you in a very broad way, the importance of this man we're going to study; he's a friend of God because God confides in him because he does what he's told; he's a man that the nations see as somebody who's different than everybody else, and with his son and his grandson, they epitomize in their lives, the whole plan and

purpose of God with humanity. It's a majestic character that we're studying!

Now it was Stephen that said, 'The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia' and so the call of Almighty God came to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees as we well know. Right up there at the top of the Persian Gulf, I've been there, brethren and sisters, and it's a remarkable place. Today, it is absolutely desolate and barren, but in the days of Abraham, it was a swarming metropolis, it was the cradle of civilization, it was fertile, it was a wonderful place to live. And Abraham was a mighty man; he wasn't some nomad that was so poor he'd go anywhere; he left a thriving metropolis, he was a man of some means, when he came into the land he had 318 servants and he was known through the land as a 'mighty prince'. Now, this man didn't leave, he didn't leave a country easily, and the God of glory appeared unto him and we learn from Joshua 24 that he was an idolater. And there are brethren that say that's not right, he would have been referring to Abraham's father. HE'S NOT! 'Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood and they served other gods', and you see, brethren and sisters, in that there is a principle. The call of Abraham is the foundation really, of all his children, because we're all the children of Abraham by faith. And we haven't come into the truth because we were righteous or because we saw the truth. We were dragged out of the gutters of humanity, many of us, to see the light of the truth, and we come in by God's grace, and Abraham was no different! And although he was an idolater, the God of glory appeared unto him and he responded unto that call, and so a little family left Ur of the Chaldees.

Let's talk about some of that family that are all mentioned in Genesis chapter 11 actually, if you'd like to come back there while I'm speaking to you, perhaps follow me in that section while we speak about this little family, that came out of Ur of the Chaldees. And like all families they're not all the same. And in this, brethren and sisters, is great exhortation for ourselves, as we look at this family. We take first of all the father of Abraham, Terah; his name means 'to delay' and that's exactly what he did. When they came from Ur of the Chaldees, and they travelled in a north westerly direction, and they'd have to do that you see, because where the Euphrates joins the Gulf there would be a huge and a broad river, and they'd travel northwest until they'd find someplace to cross that mighty river, before they could come down into the land, and they went up to a place called Haran which means 'the crossroads'. And here a family came to the crossroads of life, now what did they do?

Well, Terah's name means 'to delay' and Genesis 11:31 says he did delay, 'they came to Haran and dwelt there'. They stopped at Haran and Terah delayed, and it was a disastrous delay because he died there, brethren and sisters. When Stephen makes the point in Acts 7, that 'after his father was dead, Abraham again received the call of God to come into the promised land', so delay for Terah was fatal; he delayed at the crossroads of life.

Then there was Nahor, the brother of Abraham, and his name means 'a snorer', (you wouldn't want to be married to him, you'd never get any sleep); his name means 'a snorer', and he remained in the city of Haran. He didn't die but he stopped there, so

much so, that in the end it became known as the 'city of Nahor'. What happened there with him? Well, his family developed in Nahor and we find, brethren and sisters, that they had a semblance of the truth, but not in its purity. Not in its purity! And although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had some contact with that house, and they were far, far better than all the Canaanites, they did not hold the truth in its absolute purity, and the part that was selected from that house, she had to leave that house and come into the land, and 'there's no way' says Abraham, 'Isaac goes to her, she comes to Isaac'. When Rebekah came out of that house, she had to learn what were the first principles of the oracles of God in its absolute purity, but at least, they did have some foundation of some principles to live by in the city of Nahor, but he stayed there.

There was Haran, another brother, his name means 'a mountaineer' and he died we read in verse 28, in the presence of his father. That's all that's said about him.

Then there is Lot, Abraham's nephew. Lot, you know brethren and sisters, he's described by Peter as 'a just man'. You know, sometimes we don't understand that; we look at Lot as being the opposite to Abraham, and in some cases he was, but whatever else we might think of Lot, Peter calls him 'just Lot'. Never forget that! God was merciful to him; but his name means 'veiled'. His very name means to be 'veiled', and the day came when he and Abraham stood in another crossroads of life, and he lifted up his eyes, but they were veiled and he didn't see clearly the issues of life, and he chose disastrously. And we'll go through that record, brethren and sisters, and you will see just exactly what a disaster it was, when he had veiled eyes. Interesting thing about Lot, and that is this, there is no mention of his wife in the record, until we come to Sodom. And although we can't prove it, it seems to be highly suggestive, that perhaps that's where his wife came from. There's no mention of her until we come to Sodom, and if he'd taken a wife out of Sodom, his eyes were indeed veiled. So he was there, Abraham's nephew.

And then we have Sarai, 'a princess', the daughter of Terah by another wife, so she's Abraham's half sister. She was Abraham's half sister and she's a partner with Abraham, and you know, brethren and sisters, I would dearly love to have the time, to take you through the scripture about this married couple. We'll touch upon it here and there, but they are set forth in the scripture as an outstanding example of fidelity and trust in married life, and yet their life in their married life, is fraught with peril, and comes dangerously close, to that marriage breaking up. And yet they came through together, through thick and thin, those two wonderful people came through to such an extent, that in 1 Peter 3, he sets them before the brethren and sisters as the supreme example, in that sense, of a husband and wife who stuck together with all the vicissitudes of life, and let nothing come between them, although there were times, when by their own foolishness, both of them, could have split that marriage right down the middle. And yet they're chosen in the record as being an example in that regard. And so what the record is trying to tell us with these two wonderful people, brethren and sisters, is that married life is not always smooth; it'll never be perfect but we can stick together. And so the prophet Isaiah, which we'll look at in another context, says, 'Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged', and he saw

Abraham as the rock, as far as his faith was concerned, and Sarah as a quarry out of whom we are hewn. And if Abraham is called the 'father of the faithful' in 1 Peter 3, Peter speaks about the sisters as being 'her daughters'. She becomes the 'mother of the faithful'. As we move through the record and we see the very foolish mistakes that they made (and I'm not here to pass judgment on Abraham and Sarah; God forbid that I should do that, but I'm here to deal with the record of God's word, and they did make foolish mistakes) and Abraham put that woman in extraordinary, dangerous situations and from time to time, we're going back to 1 Peter 3, and we're going to underline almost every word he says, taken from that record, because Peter quotes at least 5 incidents from the life of Abraham and Sarah, in the first of Peter 3, and he underlines them to show how they came through difficult situations, to still be a remarkable couple.

Now, there's only one other character mentioned in Genesis 11 and that's Milcah. She was Nahor's wife; she's mentioned in verse 29, 'Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah'. So the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah; her name means a 'queen', and you know, brethren and sisters, the record of the Word of God is intensely interesting, and later on, (we won't come to this again, but I have to mention this in a broad sweep, that if you read carefully the record later on, of that house in Haran, you will learn that that woman was the strength of that house. No doubt about that! There are little hints in the record all along, that when Isaac sent for a wife back there, and when later on Jacob went back there, it was the influence of Milcah, above all others, that made that place, a little strength, and God would be the provider of that, of course.

Now, you'll notice, in Genesis 11:26, it says, 'Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran', and if we accept that record as it stands, we would assume from that that Abraham was the oldest of Terah's sons, and he was not! He was decidedly not; because we learn from verse 32, that 'Terah lived until he was 205 years of age' and 'that Abraham was 75', we learn that in Genesis 12:4, 'when he entered into the land'. Now if Abraham was 75 when he entered into the land, Terah would then be 130 years old, but he begat his family at 70, and of course, obviously, what the record is doing and what it did in many other cases, when the genealogies are given, God elevates Abraham to the firstborn position, as he did with Ephraim above Manasseh; as he did with Jacob above Esau, and many other instances, the firstborn is chosen, not because of natural descent, brethren and sisters, but because of personal merit. And so Abraham is obviously not Terah's firstborn but is recorded there, as being the firstborn.

Now, we read of all these genealogies; we read about Terah's sons, we read about their relationships with their wives, and in the middle of that, we're told in verse 30, 'that Sarai was barren; she had no child'. And you know, brethren and sisters, there in the record, the drama is set. This is the drama of Abraham's life, and what you're going to see, hopefully is this, that as we move through the life of Abraham, we're going to see that the focus of attention on Abraham as being childless, that in the early chapters of his life with the record focusing attention on him, that when the time draws near, for the birth of that wonderful boy, Isaac, all of a sudden, in the most dramatic way, the record

moves away from Abraham, and the focus of attention is upon Sarah, in a most remarkable fashion! So when the boy comes into the world, the boy is, in the preeminent sense, the seed of the woman. And you watch when we get to that record how it does that; you'll be astonished to see how that record's written, to the focusing of that attention away from Abraham, who at that time already had a boy running around the earth 13 years of age, proving that there was in his body, the possibility that that woman is still barren, and God's attention spotlights on her, and when the boy was born, he was the closest thing you've ever had, to a virgin birth. Although he wasn't born of a virgin, Abraham was his father, it's the closest thing in the Old Testament that you'll ever get to it, and the focus is on Sarah and we're going to learn some wonderful things about her, when we get to that record.

And so they came to Haran, and the record says, 'they dwelt there'. The word means 'to sit down' and they sat down there. So there was a delay in the call, in the obedience of that call; they hadn't left the country as God would want them to do, and Terah, whose very name means 'to delay', he delayed, but Stephen says, 'and when his father was dead'. It was then, brethren and sisters, that the call came again to Abraham, in chapter 12. 'Now Yahweh had said', in the AV that's put in the past tense; it's not so in the Hebrew. In the Hebrew it is in the present tense; you could read that almost like this, 'Yahweh said again unto Abraham' and the second call came, not only to get out of a country but now, brethren and sisters, 'from thy kindred and from thy father's house'. One thing to leave home, that is for a whole family to leave Ur of the Chaldees, now it's another thing to 'get out of your father's house, and says the scripture, 'come into a land that I will show thee'. Now, you know, brethren and sisters, when it says that, in the Hebrew again, the word is in the imperative and in the singular. It says, 'Go for yourself, Abraham; don't delay any longer. You go, you go for yourself', and he did. And he went out, says the apostle Paul, 'he obeyed God by faith not knowing whither he went'. He wasn't told which direction the Promised Land was; he wasn't told what it was; he went out, brethren and sisters, because he believed God, and he went out not knowing whither he went, and he went for himself. He left the 'snorer' behind; he left his father in his grave; Haran was dead; he left them all behind, they delayed, but he went into that country not knowing whither he went, and into the land of Canaan they came.

Then, in verse 6 of chapter 12, 'And Abraham passed through the land unto the place of Sichem or Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh. AND, and the Canaanite was then in the land.' Why does it say that? Because you see, brethren and sisters, Abraham is going to be given a choice; he was going to be given a choice of assimilation or separation. The Canaanite's there, if he wants the Canaanite, he can have the Canaanite, but God doesn't want him to assimilate with the Canaanite. The Canaanite was then in the land; God didn't clear the land out and give it to him. He left those people there; he wants to get from Abraham a response, so Abraham is given a choice, and where is he given that choice? He's given the choice at Shechem! Let me tell you a few things about Shechem, and tonight, God willing, when we put up our slides on the geography of the Holy Land, I'm going to repeat this only in a little more detail.

It's an incredible place! So here is the place where Abraham first came into the land, to

where the promises were repeated to him. To Shechem; Shechem sits, brethren and sisters, between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. Ebal and Gerizim face each other and there's a little saddle in between; they are only separated by 500 yards between them. Ebal is a little higher than Gerizim and it's a bald head like me (it's got no verdure up there, and the other one has some verdure on it). That's the mount of cursing (Ebal) and that's the mount of blessing (Gerizim), and there's a little saddle in between, and 'Shechem' means 'the burden bearer' because it's like a saddle. I'm going to show you a slide of an Arab going pass there, with a little donkey with his saddle just like the saddle behind him. And so Shechem had the idea of bearing a burden in the sense of accepting your responsibilities. Now look at these references, see how the land speaks to you; think about Abraham coming there, and God says, 'Right, here's the land, now the Canaanite is here. You've got a choice; you can assimilate or separate, that's up to you! The two mountains were looking at him and there was his responsibility in the middle, to bear that burden. Jacob came there when he came back from Padanaram; he stopped right there and he got all those people and said, 'Right, I want all your idols, I want all your earrings of gold and so forth', and he buried them there, and he gave them a choice, to choose the land they'd come from, from Laban, or to face up with him to the responsibilities of the Promised Land, in that place. Moses told Joshua, he said, 'when you take the children of Israel into the land, take them up to Shechem before you do a thing', did you ever think about that? He took them to Shechem, in the centre of the land; it's the exact centre of the land. He came back later on to Jericho, to fight his way up there; why didn't the Canaanites fight back? Because God's providence was overshadowing them, and they walked through the land in absolute peace and came to the centre, and Moses put six of the tribes on Gerizim, he put six on Ebal, he put the priests in between and they chanted the blessings and the cursings of the LORD. Have a pick, what do you want? blessings or the cursings? and it was in that very spot, brethren and sisters, and Moses knew this, it was in that very spot that God said to Abraham, 'I'll bless them that bless you, and I'll curse him that curseth you', and the Canaanite was in the Land. He's accursed isn't he? But to fellow Abraham it was a blessing, and there was the choice of Abraham, and there was the choice of the 12 tribes of Israel, a blessing or a curse, and when they chanted those blessings, they would remember back, 'I'll bless them that bless you, and curse him that curseth thee'. That was Moses, he dies and Joshua is left, what does he do? He gets to 110 years of age, he goes between Ebal and Gerizim to that very spot, brings all Israel there and says, 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve'; make a pick, 'As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh'. Wonderful, brethren and sisters, he took them there to make their choice, and the final illustration, there are others, but we'll take the final illustration. Jesus came there, weary with his journey, sat fast at Jacob's well, right between Ebal and Gerizim and up came a woman of Samaria and said, 'Our fathers said we were to worship on Mount Gerizim', and Jesus said, 'Take your pick; salvation is of the Jews'. So she had to make a choice right there, and so that's what Shechem is all about; it about bearing the responsibility of making a decision. Where do you want to go, brethren and sisters, where do you want to go? We will be blessed if we are blessed with faithful Abraham; and he came there and the Canaanite was in the land, and he had to make that tremendous decision; he had to make it right there and then!



Now it says in that place, it was called 'the plain of Moreh', the plain of Moreh. Now the word 'plain' really is 'an oak' it's not a plain at all, it's an oak tree! And the oak tree, (I don't know what they're like there; Len's the expert on oak trees, he reckons he is anyway, but I know this from the books that I read), that as far as oak trees in the land are concerned, they don't grow in groves, they are solitary trees. And that oak tree symbolized Abraham, as being rooted in that land, as a solitary figure. Not mingling with the Canaanites but as a solitary figure and Isaiah 51 again, (which we're not going to turn to, I'm going to come back to that later on in another context), in Isaiah 51 it says, 'I called him alone; and blessed him, and increased him'. I called him alone, blessed him, increased him, and in the book of Galatians, 'The gospel preached unto Abraham, we are blessed with faithful Abraham for as many that are baptized into Abraham are the children of Abraham'. So, he's called alone, we're blessed with him; he's increased. That's really an epitome of the book of Galatians, but anyway for the moment, it's the oak tree! A solitary monument and it's the oak of Moreh. Now, Moreh, brethren and sisters, sometimes people say it means three things; it's used in the bible for a teacher, it's used in the bible as an archer, and it's used in the bible to describe the early rain of the opening of the season. As with the latter rains of course, they come in the spring; the early rains herald the winter when they get their crops in. So it means a teacher, it means an archer or it means the early rain, now in that confusing array, what can we say the word 'Moreh' means? Well, you look at it, it's only got one thing in common, doesn't it? A teacher points to the lesson, the archer points the arrow, and the early rain points to the season; they're all pointing directions, so Abraham came into the land. God said, 'Here we are at Shechem, you are a solitary monument, don't worry about the Canaanites, get your roots into this land, and this is the way! The oaks of Moreh; remarkable! So there it was all symbolized; the wonderful things that God had in store for Abraham.

Then we read in verse 7 of Genesis 12, 'And Yahweh appeared unto Abraham', you know, brethren and sisters, in the Law of Moses, later on when the Law was given, God said this, 'that they could build an altar anywhere providing it was in a place where God appeared unto them', so that they didn't always have to go to Jerusalem to the brazen altar. But if they were to build an altar, they must not make it a shape; they mustn't shape it, they mustn't do any work on it, they must get unhewn stones anywhere and build an altar only on the basis where God 'appeared' unto them. So they could record all over the land significant spots where God appeared, and there's not one single altar built in the Old Testament in that way, that hasn't got some great significance. And we've just pointed out the significance of this one, for here is an altar and it was the apostle Paul who said, 'we have an altar, Jesus Christ', and He is an altar, not shaped by human hands, and if ever God appeared, it was in His life, and there He was, as it were, a monument, an altar upon the earth that God has appeared to us, and the shaping of Him was divine, and He came to confirm the promises made unto Abraham, because He was a 'burden bearer of Shechem' and He made a decision, and a right decision, that He'd go the way of God. And He did that perfectly and He came to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that altar that Abraham built, brethren and sisters, its shadow pointed straight to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the one who would confirm those wonderful promises that God had made to Abraham. And you do know

something, it was here that God said, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land! Isn't that interesting? You see, when God said that for the first time, after Abraham had crossed the borders of that land, brethren and sisters, note this: that the land was FIRST PROMISED to his seed, not to him. And said the apostle, 'that seed was Christ'. And so, the promises were not to Abraham's seed and then to the individual. The individual is first given the land; 'Unto thy seed will I give this land', whoever said it could be Abraham? And of course, before the land could ever become Abraham's, it has to become Christ's. And that's how the promise goes!

Now verse 8 says, 'And he removed him from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east'. Ah, that's interesting isn't it? Now, first of all, Beth-el means 'the house of God', we know that; Hai means 'ruin' and again Abraham is between a choice. It was later on, brethren and sisters, that there he stood with Lot when Lot made his fatal choice to go to Sodom. They stood between Beth-el and Hai, and we'll take that up when we come to it, in the chapter that deals with that. But, for the moment, we have Abraham here, and do you know something, and he makes a bad choice right there and initially he chose 'ruin' until he learnt his lesson, and came back and choose 'the house of God'.

But, before we deal with that bad mistake, I want you to note something, would you keep your hand in Genesis and turn to Hebrews 11. You'll find something interesting concerning this place! If you've got your hand in both places, we can make a comparison. We read in Genesis first of all, looking at that, it says, 'He removed him from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el and pitched his tent'. Pitched his tent, that's the first time we're told that Abraham pitched his tent; not that he wouldn't have pitched it before, he had to, but we're not told it before. That's the first time; now look at Hebrews chapter 11 verses 9 and 10, 'By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Brethren and sisters, the first time ever mentioned that he pitched his tent was at Beth-el, the house of God. Isn't that interesting? that the apostle very deftly picks that up, points out that he lived in tents because he 'looked for a city whose builder and maker is God' (the house of God pitched his tent there). Wonderful how that's put together! And he built an altar there, we read, and 'he called upon the name of Yahweh'.

And coming back to that Genesis record in verse 9, we read that 'Abraham journeyed, going on still toward the south'. If we were to put the record together, we read that 'he departed from Ur of the Chaldees'. Another verse says 'he came forth' and we read in verse 6 of this chapter that he 'passed through', now we're reading that he 'journeyed' and then finally we come to the point when he 'went down into Egypt', so it's a continuous journey. He departs, he comes forth, he passes through, he journeys, he goes down, and he moved into the south, brethren and sisters. It says, 'he went into the south; he journeyed still going toward the south'. The word 'south' is negative, it means 'a dry land' and as it is in Israel (contrary to Australia, our dry country is to the

'north'), their dry country was to the south, and we read in verse 10 that there was a 'famine in the land'. Now, look, you talk about difficulties, right?; we talk about problems, we have brethren and sisters come and say, 'I've got a problem; I'm worried! You know, God doesn't care for me; I've got a problem'. You think of problems; we don't know what problems are! God says to this man, 'leave your home'; hundreds of miles away, he leaves a prosperous society; he's a prince, he's got 318 servants with him; he's left comfortable circumstances. God says, 'into a land that I will show you'; stands him in the land and says, 'right, this is the land I'm going to give you'; and look at him now! The land is absolutely swarming with his enemies, his wife's barren, and he's in the middle of a drought, and you think you've got problems! You know, brethren and sisters, they were problems multiplied because God had promised him, exactly the opposite. He'd promised him that he'd have no enemies, He promised him to have a seed, and He promised him a land flowing with milk and honey, and it's nothing like it! And we talk about Abraham's failures; I tell you, I'd hate to be in that situation; I'd be thinking to myself, 'well, what on earth am I going to do? who could I trust if I can't trust God? Here I am my wife's barren, my land's barren, the place is swarming with my enemies, what am I going to do? And of course, in that situation he made a mistake; he went down, he went down into Egypt. What a tragedy that was! and 'he sojourned in Egypt' we read in verse 10. The word means 'as a stranger' he didn't go there to stop, brethren and sisters. You know what I'd have done? I'd have gone back home; I'd have gone back to Ur of the Chaldees, but says the apostle, that if they had been mindful they could have returned to the land of Ur of the Chaldees, and in the Greek of Hebrews 11 which I'm alluding to, the word in the Greek means 'they could have always returned' there was always opportunity. They never lacked opportunity to go back if they wanted to; so despite the fact that Abraham went down to Egypt which was a mistake, he didn't go home. He went down to Egypt to sojourn there. It was a disaster, no doubt about that! anyone who goes to Egypt will always experience a disaster, and all through Israel's history, they repeated the mistake of their forefather. It was almost like a 'hereditary factor in them'; they were always going 'down into Egypt' and it was always disastrous. They should have thought about their forebearer, Abraham.

Now, what happened there, of course, we have the problem with his wife, and from verse 11, ....and you know brethren and sisters, he reprimanded Abraham, and Abraham who was to be the father of many nations including Egypt, here is a man far more unworthy than Abraham, who has to rebuke Abraham himself on the basis of principle. Ever have that happen in your life? You know, brethren and sisters, there is no more telling exhortation that we could receive, than to have to be told by a Gentile what our principles are! And Abraham would hang his head, to be told by Pharaoh about the principles of marriage. Pharaoh called unto him, 'what is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didn't you tell me that she is thy wife? And he knew that! and that verse also proved that the vows of marriage are binding outside the truth as well as in, because you know why? Marriage was not ordained in the beginning by a ceremony; but the marriage was ordained by a creative act. In the beginning, says Jesus, 'have you never read that God made them, male and female'; and every man and woman is made. Marriage is ordained by a creative act; not by a theory or a ceremony, and Pharaoh understood the principles of that better in this sense, than did the father of the

firstborn ... And he had to learn that, brethren and sisters; he had to learn that. And when Pharaoh sent him out, in verse 16, he entreated Abraham, that is, he was kind to him; he treated Abraham well for her sake. Pharaoh felt humiliated by the fact he had another man's wife under his roof, and he was humiliated, and so because he was that way, he said, 'Look, Abraham, you go!' and he gave him sheep and oxen, asses and men servants and maidservants and among those maidservants, brethren and sisters, he would have given him Hagar the Egyptian; and planted in that house was a bit of poetic justice, because later on, that promise of God concerning the birth of that marvellous child, if it were possible, which it wasn't, if it were possible was almost circumvented by an expedient that Sarah adopted. And she had to learn that lesson just as powerfully as Abraham did, when later on she had under her command, Hagar the Egyptian. You see, brethren and sisters, Hagar would never have been there, if Abraham had never visited Egypt. And so they sent him away and all that he had, and away he went.

When we come back tomorrow morning, brethren and sisters, I'm going to show you that when he went out of Egypt, he sent forth his flocks and he headed for one singular spot, and that was the spot where he had made his fatal decision, and he went back there to make another decision exactly the opposite. Abraham partly learned that lesson through the expedient which Sarah herself adopted later on to do, almost the same as what he had done. She learned that lesson so that in the end, brethren and sisters, God was able to fulfil His promise and Isaac, the only begotten of Abraham, was born into the world, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.