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[0 : 00] Well, Father Abraham has many sons. Many sons has Father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you. So let's all praise the Lord. Right hand. And so it goes on. But what on earth does that song mean? Maybe if you've grown up in church, that is a song that many children are taught to sing. Father Abraham has many sons. And it just goes on. You just wave different limbs after each verse.

But actually, what does the song mean? Well, in a general sense, to be a son of Abraham is to say that the God of Abraham is my God. That's a very general sense. But what on earth does that mean? For the God of Abraham to be my God or your God?

Well, let's look a little bit about what we've seen so far in our journey through the Bible in seven weeks. That's what we're doing. We're getting an overview of the story of the Bible.

We've seen first and foremost that God is the one who made the world. He is not part of this universe, not part of creation. He is the creator of the whole universe. He is distinct from it.

And he made this universe on purpose. And that means that there is a purpose to this universe. That is a key thing to know about this God of Abraham.

[1 : 29] He's the God who made the world. We've also seen from the story of Adam that the mess that the world is in is at root the fault of humanity.

It is our fault because we have rejected God. The people that God made to rule over the world rejected the God who made them. And yet, at that same time, God the creator promised to make all things right.

So he's the creator and he's promised to make all things right after we messed it up. Last week we saw Noah, didn't we? We looked at that story. And we saw there that it was like a preview of the rest of world history.

God will judge the world one day in order to create a new world on the other side. He will bring about a perfect creation with perfect people. And that judgment is on hold for now.

He's put his bow in the sky. He's hung it up not to shoot it at anyone. So when we see it, we are to be reminded that God is putting that judgment on hold for now, for people to come to him.

[2 : 36] And at the end we saw God making this promise through Noah, through Noah's prophecy, that God would bring together a people, first through the sons of Shem, and then bringing in people from the sons of Japheth to form the people of God.

So surely the key to being a son of Abraham is either to be a son of Shem or a son of Japheth. Surely that's all you need is just to be descended from Shem or Japheth. Well the story of Ham actually is what tells you that that can't be the case. If you're thinking all I need is to be descended from Shem or descended from Japheth, the story of Ham says not so fast.

We see in Ham a son of Noah who is in this godly line of Seth, and yet he proved himself to be more like the seed of the serpent than the seed of the woman.

That's the two lines we're tracing throughout the Bible, the serpent and the seed of the woman. And yet somebody from the line of Seth shows that he's actually on the other side.

[3 : 47] And so just affiliation is not enough. Whether it's by being genetically related, or just saying that we have a shared story, a shared history.

Belonging to one of these so-called Abrahamic faiths is not enough. Just seeming to belong to him, mere affiliation won't do.

So being a son of Abraham, and that applies to men and women, it is this term of those who are descended from Abraham, it's going to be much more than just being affiliated to him, in terms of genes and biology, or whether in terms of stories and just being monotheistic in general.

And that is made clear in the chapters that lead up to the story of Genesis. After the time of Noah, things continued to erode. Mankind kept getting worse.

They kept going on in rebellion, to the point where all of humanity decided to gang up together, to completely oppose God, by uniting against him, forming this kind of superculture, where there was no diversity, no difference, just one united superculture, united against God.

[5 : 04] And they would build their great sort of central point, was this great tower they wanted to build, as a symbol of this superculture that would reject God.

God has set down to frustrate that. He has confused their languages, which means we have lots of different people groups now, scattered all over the world.

And so the situation in terms of man's friendship and relationship with God, is still dire. It's still really bad. God has set down to frustrate man's plans, but nothing has been done yet to restore the fellowship of mankind with God.

And now, even in the line of Shem, even in the line where we thought that's where the hope is, nobody has been immune to the great erosion. Nobody there belongs to God.

Nobody there believes in God. There is total erosion, even in the line where we thought, they'll be the people who will get everything sorted. And then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, an old man just ups and leaves his country.

[6 : 16] And he abandons the family religion of moon worship. And now, these days, a massive chunk of the population claims some kind of link to this one man who just up and left.

But to understand what it means to be that son of Abraham, we do need to look at the God of Abraham. So from Abraham's story, we're going to see three things about Abraham's God.

Abraham's God steps in, he steps down, and he lifts up. That'll be the three things you need to know about the God of Abraham. He steps in, he steps down, and he lifts up.

There is one very simple explanation for why this moon worshipper just ups and leaves and goes somewhere else and starts over. It's because God stepped in.

But the story seemed totally hopeless. No relationship, no friendship with God until God stepped in. If you look at, over the page, it's just at the bottom, so Nehemiah 9, verse 7.

[7 : 25] You are the Lord, the God who chose Abraham and brought him out. God chose him. God brought him out.

Or later on, in Hebrews 11, verse 8. What was Abraham doing when he left? He was just very simply obeying God's call. He didn't even know where he was going.

He was simply obeying God's call because God had stepped in. He'd stepped in with a radical, total, one-sided call.

And Abraham just went. Abraham didn't give a list of excuses why it was a bad idea. He just went. He didn't bring a list of demands and try to negotiate.

He just went. God didn't just come and gather a load of people and give a presentation into a patch board room and say, well, here's the plan and here's all the details and if you're interested, do sign up on this sheet and we'll see who might be interested.

[8 : 35] And then followed by an awkward silence when everybody waits for somebody else to do it. Thinking, oh, yeah, this is a nice message but that'll be good for him or that'll be good for her. No, God just said, you, go.

It was that simple. That is actually what is happening every time you hear a talk from the Bible like right now. You're in a room with lots of people but God is saying to each person who listens to the Bible, you, go.

And he wants to see what that response is to the call. What is our response to God's call? You, go. Will we go? Will we trust in him?

So maybe you'll think, okay, well, that's all it is to be a child of Abraham. You just listen to God and you obey God. God steps in, speaks, calls, and a child of Abraham just obeys.

Is that it, well, it might be an okay conclusion but the God of Abraham doesn't just step in. God of Abraham also steps down.

[9 : 44] So in Nehemiah 9, it says, you've kept your promise. That's what he, that's what the later people of Israel said. You kept your promise.

It is thanks to God that there is a land waiting for Abraham and his descendants. It is thanks to God that this barren woman who is beyond the age of childbearing and this old man, it's thanks to God that they have a son.

We read of this strange ceremony in Genesis chapter 15, didn't we? And people who had been familiar with this ritual, because it was a relatively familiar ritual, those familiar with it would read this and they'd be stunned at what happens.

Now this was a typical way of affirming a covenant, a promise, a kind of a guaranteed relationship between two parties. Usually what would happen is a promise is made and there are promises on both sides and they sort of cut up these animals and walk in between them together saying, if either of this breaks this promise, then may we be cursed, may we kind of almost be like these animals. If either party breaks it. And yet here, the smoking fire goes through the pieces alone. God goes through alone.

[11 : 09] He doesn't say, come with me Abraham, we're both going to take this promise. He goes through it alone. He takes on full responsibility for the promise keeping. God does all the work.

He takes full responsibility. What God calls him to, God also provides. Abraham's job was simply to take God at his word.

to believe in the promise and to obey the call. He might have had all kinds of questions going through his mind. How will this work?

What if this or that happens? How do I do such and such? What would it look like? Do I have to give this up? Do I have to do that? God's job? And yet, as he saw God step down to make this promise, guaranteeing the whole thing himself, he trusted.

He just believed. That is the defining thing about Abraham. He believed God. It says, and it's quoted throughout the Bible, Abraham believed God and that was counted to him as righteousness.

[12 : 22] Why was Abraham in a right state before God? Not because he was particularly good. He was a rebellious moon worshipper from nowhere. But he believed God.

That is why he was a friend of God. Because he believed. It wasn't that, if you're a child of Abraham, it's because you believe.

It's not because you share his genes. It's not because you have similar stories about him, but because you believe God. Thousands of years later, in John chapter 8, some Jewish leaders would tell Jesus, well, we're the offspring of Abraham.

And Jesus' response is simply, no, you're not. Maybe genetically, maybe in terms of heritage, but you are not the offspring of Abraham because if you were, you would do what Abraham did.

You would believe in me. You would believe in God. But you're trying to get rid of me. So you're clearly not really the offspring of Abraham. You can be the offspring of Abraham and not be the offspring of Abraham.

[13 : 28] You cannot truly be one of his. Because to be one of his actually is to believe God. God has told Abraham that he's got everything covered and the answer to that is to believe it, is to receive it.

You may know nothing about what's to come but you can know that you'll have all that you need. Which brings us to this final point.

So God steps in and then he steps down to make the promise and guarantee it and finally he lifts up. Somebody once described Christianity as unembarrassed supernaturalism.

I think that's a weird description of it but he's saying no this is what Christianity is it is unembarrassed supernaturalism. We believe that from beginning to end it is about what God steps in to do.

It is about him doing what actually is impossible and yet he does it. Abraham's story is unbelievably impossible.

[14 : 38] Shem's line has completely disintegrated to the point where not only do they not believe in God but they can't even have children now. And so we have a story of an old childless man becoming a father to many nations.

Then we have the story of this father giving up his son to be sacrificed and yet coming out the other end with his son alive. We have this story of a rebellious moon worshipper becoming the father of all those who truly believe in the true creator and the true redeemer.

It is an impossible story. And if you're thinking well there's just no way I could believe, I couldn't really become a Christian, I couldn't continue as a Christian, there's all kinds of things I think I just couldn't do, there's a sense in which you're right, you can't.

But there's a much more important sense in which you're wrong, because the key is that God can do it. God steps in and he steps down and he lifts up, he does the work and he does the impossible.

He can do anything, he has done whatever it's taken and he did in the life of Abraham but not just there. Because he stepped down and lifted up in a much more significant way that we can learn about through Abraham's life but is truly fulfilled much later.

[16 : 11] God himself left his home in the person of Jesus. He took on the curses, he didn't just say I will take on curses for covenant breaking but he said no I will take it now and he did take on those curses as Jesus died on the cross.

He took the punishment that all those who would believe in him deserve. he truly gave himself as a sacrifice not to be spared by a ram but he was the lamb that God provided to be the sacrifice and yet still was raised again from the dead afterwards.

And he is the one in whom we are called to believe. He's the one who goes before us. He doesn't call us to believe in anything that he wouldn't do himself but he did this for us and calls us.

He truly has stepped down and lifted us up by doing the impossible. This is what it means to be a child of Abraham.

To believe in God. Specifically to believe in Jesus whom God sent. To follow that call of Abraham to its furthest extreme on our behalf.

[17 : 31] And Abraham truly does have many sons. Many sons has father Abraham all around the world. People who have put their trust in Jesus.

And thanks be to God I am one of them. And the question is are you? Let's pray.