

ABRAHAM THE _____

Abraham is listed as one of the faith exemplars in Hebrews Chapter 11. It would thus be prudent to look at some of his attributes or characteristics to see how they stack up against our ways of thinking and living. As we do so, we can fill in the blank -- striving to make our **calling and election sure**. (2 Peter 1:10).

Hebrews Chapter 11 has this to say about Abraham:

8] By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9] By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10] For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10).

As we look a bit closer at this biographical history, we should keep in mind the subject of Hebrews Chapter 11 is faith, as it opens with these words: **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.** (Hebrews 11:1-2). Abraham is one of those “elders”, and his “good report” is our subject today.

VERSE 8 --

So we begin with verse 8: **By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.**

The Call:

Verse 8 says Abraham was called, so we might refer to him as **ABRAHAM THE CALLED**. That calling is reported at Genesis 12:1: **Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.**

Now Abraham obeyed that call, seemingly without disputing or murmuring, relying on the power and veracity of God. So can we not call him **ABRAHAM THE OBEDIENT?**

Stephen's final sermon spoke of this calling as well: **And [Stephen] said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. (Acts 7:2).**

The people of God are often called upon to leave worldly connections, interests and comforts. True heirs obey such calls and go forward, not knowing the future but confident in the performance of God's promises. I dare say every soul in this place today has, to one extent or another, had such experiences. And I also dare say every soul in this place today is likely to have such experiences as time goes on.

We learn from Genesis 11:31 that Abraham's country at the time of this famous call was **Ur of the Chaldees**, but its name is of secondary importance. Every person living in this earth has a country or a place they call home. Such a place generally provides security, comfort and wellbeing. It is no easy thing to uproot oneself from home and country. Ask any military brat; they will – almost to the person – quickly tell you of their hardships growing up resulting from frequent moves. And yet those moves are not done in the blind; they know where they're going, they have help in the moving process and related expenses, and they realize those moves go with the job when they sign on. The same holds true for employees of large corporations, government agencies, and the like.

But Abraham had no such safety nets. He was on his own. He and his had to quickly get on with it, at their own expense and without outside worldly help. In fact, he went, not knowing where it was he was going. Incredible faith! So we can certainly call him **ABRAHAM THE FAITHFUL.**

Matthew Poole opines that once Abraham was on the move, *he pursued God's orders in his motion from place to place, though he knew neither the way, nor*

the place in which and whither he was to move, resting himself on God's word and guidance, and relying wholly on his provision for him, and protection of him in all his ways. So we can call him **ABRAHAM THE FORWARD MOVER**. Remember, had Abraham been mindful of his native land, that is to say if Abraham had been desirous of returning to his homeland, he had opportunity to do so and could **have returned**. (Hebrews 11:15). But, scripture says, he desired a better country, one that was **heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called (his) God: for he hath prepared for (him) a city.** (Hebrews 11:16).

By way of spiritual application of this calling, when Abraham was called out of his own country, kindred, and father's house it was an emblem of the call of God's people out from among the men of the world, and from their friends, relations and acquaintances. As Abraham was called from Ur so are God's little sheep called from darkness, bondage, idolatry and communion with wicked men; so that, just like Abraham, they might not perish with idolaters. Indeed, the Lord's people are chosen vessels for whom God has peculiar and marvelous blessings in store.

The Inheritance:

The verse says Abraham was **to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance**. Accordingly, **ABRAHAM THE HEIR** is a good label. Genesis 12:7 speaks to this inheritance in this fashion: **And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.**

And referring back to the previously cited Genesis 12:1, the inheritance is described as **a land that I will show thee**.

But fleshing this out from Stephen's sermon, we see that the God of glory gave Abraham no inheritance in the land where he was headed. The scripture says: **And he (God) gave him (Abraham) none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.** (Acts 7:5).

So what are we to make of this? See if these comments from Jamieson-Fausset-Brown help: *When the promise of the land was given him [Abraham] the Canaanite was still in the land, and himself a stranger; it is in the new heaven and new earth that he shall receive his personal inheritance promised him; so believers sojourn on earth as strangers, while the ungodly and Satan lord it over the earth; but at Christ's coming that same earth which was the scene of the believer's conflict shall be the inheritance of Christ and His saints.*

Looking at it through those lens we get more understanding of the promised inheritance that is **incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.** (1 Peter 1:4). That inheritance (both Abraham's and ours), at least in part, seems to include portions of the new earth we read of at Revelation 21:1: **And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.**

And it is vast, if this description found at Genesis 13:14-17 is to be credited:

¹⁴ And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

¹⁵ For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

¹⁶ And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

That's some serious real estate, my friends. Dr. Gill seems to agree with this analysis, although he struggles with the concept, as you can see from these remarks: *which he [Abraham] should afterwards receive for an inheritance; not in his own person, but in his seed and posterity, unless after the resurrection, in the New Jerusalem church state, and which inheritance was typical of heaven[.]*

Verse 9 --

Moving on, then, to verse 9 of Hebrews Chapter 11, which to refresh your memory reads as follows: **By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise[.]** So now we have **ABRAHAM THE SOJOURNER**.

Sojourning:

This language speaks to a transitory life style. That word – “transitory” – means not lasting, enduring, permanent or eternal. It also means lasting only a short time, brief, short-lived or temporary. **Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, for what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.** (James 4:14). **And this I say, brethren, the time is short[.]** (1 Corinthians 7:29).

Abraham’s lifestyle was transitory; it was also nomadic. He had no settled home, but instead wandered from place to place. You can call him **ABRAHAM THE ITINERANT** (wayfaring, wandering, roving, roaming and rambling) and his way of life symbolizes those of the Lord’s people, more or less. In the overall scheme of things, here today and gone tomorrow is their mindset.

Abraham’s way of life, as described here, displayed that he had no confidence or trust in this world’s offerings. So **ABRAHAM THE REALIST** is a good descriptor. To Abraham, this world was a strange country; he had no **inheritance in it.** (Acts 7:5). He was estranged and alienated; an odd ball. All who interacted with this man knew it; his way of life exuded he was an outsider. Like the hymn says, “[t]his world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through, my treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.” Hear Gill’s thoughts on this:

[S]o all God's people are sojourners in this world, strangers and pilgrims in it; this is not their dwelling place; they do not belong to it, but to another; their stay in it is but for a while; and, while they are in it, do not look upon themselves at home, but are looking out for another, and better country; they are unknown to the men of the world, and the men of the world are strangers

to them; though they have a civil conversation with them, they separate from them, both as to profaneness and superstition, and live by faith, in the expectation of the heavenly country, as Abraham also did[.]

Tabernacles:

And Abraham was a utilitarian. So, naturally, we can call him **ABRAHAM THE UTILITARIAN**. He didn't live in exotic castles or mansions. He got by with the basics. Paul well-described Abraham's approach to living in this world at 1 Corinthians 7:31: **And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.** The text tells us Abraham dwelt in tabernacles. Definitions of "tabernacle" include: Portable sanctuary; a temporary dwelling or shelter, as a tent or hut; a small or humble dwelling of simple construction.

In the context of housing for members of this church, Sam mentioned to me recently that "space is at a premium." That's the idea here. As a rule, the Lord's people are not living luxuriously or opulently; it's inconsistent with their Bible-driven philosophy of getting through this world.

Moreover, I would suggest to you that Abraham and his cadre were experienced and qualified carpenters and builders. You cannot dwell in tents and tabernacles if you don't know how to make and maintain them. Abraham was not traveling alone when responding to God's call. Genesis 12:5 tells us he was accompanied by his wife, and Lot, and **the souls that they had gotten in Haran**. Barnes talks about those "souls": *"The souls they had gotten" - the bondservants they had acquired. Where there is a large stock of cattle, there must be a corresponding number of servants to attend to them.* Most commentators believe this was a sizeable group of people accompanying Abraham. They were industrious, self-sufficient and carried their own weight. Busy builders, you might say. It takes a lot of expertise, energy and know-how to regularly be assembling tents and taking them down preparing for the next move. I ask you: Does this industrious carpentry and construction work not sound familiar? And Abraham oversaw this enterprise, so we can refer to him as **ABRAHAM THE DILIGENT**.

And please notice that Abraham so lived **with Isaac and Jacob**. That is to say, the Lord's sheep travel together and they often live with or near each other, all living as heirs looking for the **same promise** (as our verse tells us) -- the same promised land, same promised blessings and same promised Savior. Their eyes are on the same prize! So **ABRAHAM THE FELLOW TRAVELER** is good.

Verse 10 --

To remind you, here is the verse: **For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**

The City:

When considering this immense city, Deuteronomy 29:29 seems to have some application right up front: **The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.**

There is a lot of symbolism and mystery surrounding this mighty city, but there are also things about that place that are revealed, including:

- It is, in fact, a city! A "city" is distinguished from other human settlements by its relatively great size and also by its functions which are conferred by a central authority. The term can also refer to the physical streets and buildings of the city and to the collection of people who dwell there. A typical city has professional administration, regulations (ordinances) and some form of taxation.
- It has foundations. **And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** (Revelation 21:14). **And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.** (Ephesians 2:20). The foundations of this wonderful place are the words and teachings of these spiritual giants. It's all about the words!

- It is built by God. Relatively speaking, we here in this church have some rudimentary knowledge of what it takes to build and make a small house. Imagine the time and energies being expended and devoted by celestial beings to this city-building enterprise. It is demanding and all-consuming. How many thousands of years? How many angels doing God’s bidding? Big cities of this world take centuries in development.
- It is made by God. Yet you say, “God made everything”, and you cite Colossians 1:16 for support. **For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him[.]** And I say, “You’re right.” But God is this city’s maker in a special way. This city is His special pet project; His pride and joy. He shows unique care for this place and displays a particular interest in its preparation, finalization and presentation. God **hath prepared for them a city.** (Hebrews 11:16).
- It is God’s gift to his people. When finished, God will gift this celestial city to His own. **And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. * * * And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.** (Revelation 21:2, 24).
- It is beautiful. **And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal[.]** (Revelation 21:10, 11). Earthly cities, more or less, are ugly, filthy, disease-ridden and dysfunctional – especially the bigger ones. As proof, I need only refer you to places like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and so on. And so it has always been. By way of sample, some 250 years ago Paris was one

of the glorious cities on this earth. But it has been described as a “teeming, boisterous, reeking city.” “Most streets were narrow and crowded, filled with stalls where Parisians hawked their wares or brought their work, their socializing, and their arguments. Hazards abounded: dangling shop signs, projecting additions to overcrowded homes, overhanging flower boxes. There were no sidewalks. People, animals, wagons, and carriages all jostled for position, colliding with one another and tipping over the makeshift stalls, adding to traffic and din.” (Catherine Kerrison, *Jefferson’s Daughters*, pp. 54, 55.) But this promised city is gorgeous in all respects. **And the building of the wall of (the city) was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony [kal-said-un-ee]; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite [chris-oh-lite]; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus [chris-oh-praise-us]; the eleventh, a jacinth [jay-senth]; the twelfth, an amethyst.** (Revelation 21:18-21). Take a few moments to study up on these precious stones, and you will be treated to some of the most beautiful sights available in this world, gorgeous rocks, with a wide array of stunning colors: Blue, gray, black, rust, orange, brown, green, turquoise, red, yellow, gold, purple, and otherwise.

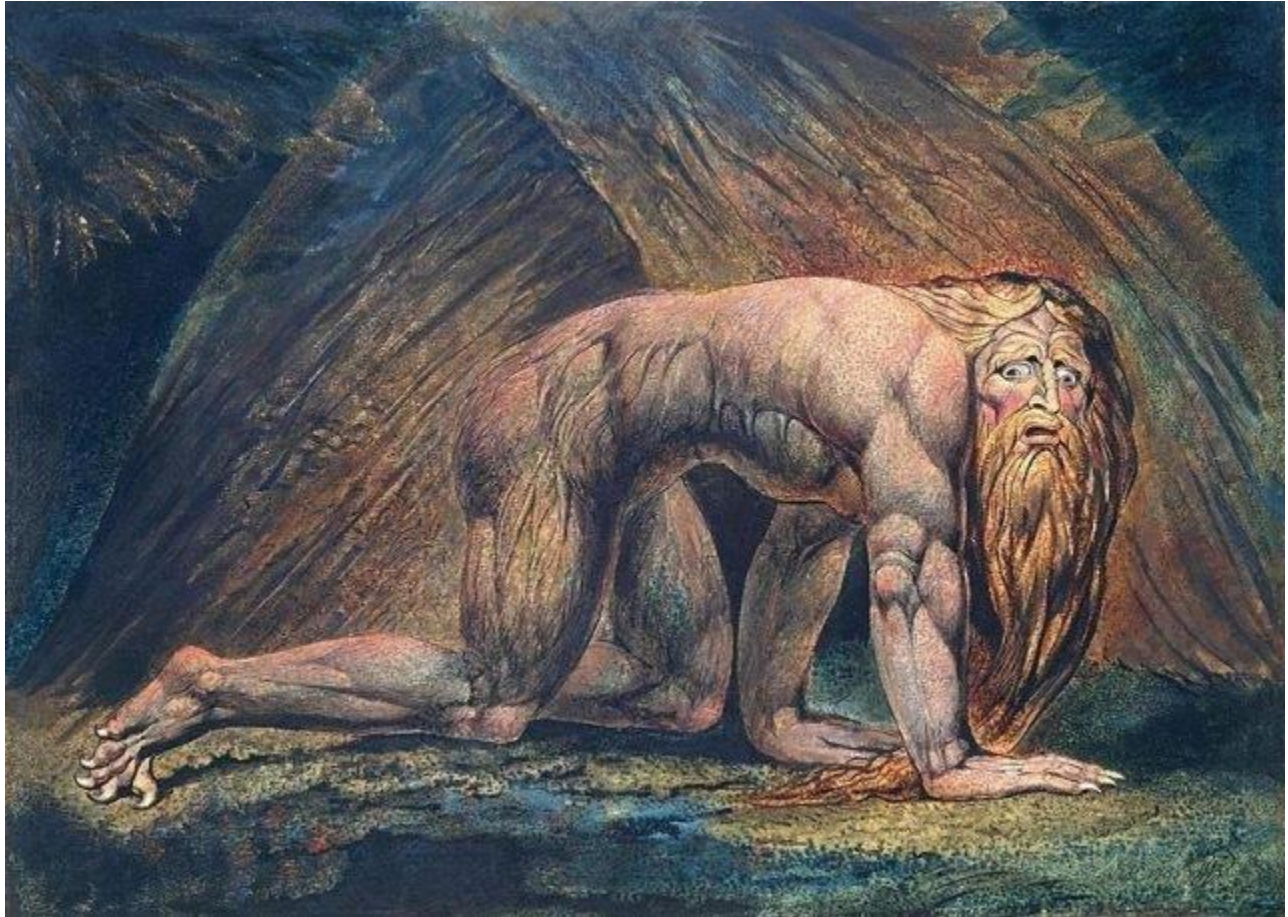
- It is gigantic. I earlier mentioned the length and breadth of this promised place, from Genesis Chapter 13 where the Lord had Abraham take in the full scope of it all, necessitating that Abraham look towards all four directions of the compass. We learn more from this revelatory language: **And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.** (Revelation 21:15-17). Length of each side of this square=375 miles.

- It is currently invisible. The human eye cannot see this wonderful place. That doesn't mean it's not there. Which returns us to Hebrews 11:1 where we started, that faith is the **substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.** **ABRAHAM THE SEER** sounds good to me.
- It is eternal. **For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.** (Hebrews 13:14). Cities of this world are not continuing. Even the greatest of them have eventually fallen and disappeared. The present great ones will follow suit. But this heavenly city we now consider is continuing; that is to say, it continues on and on, eternally.

Let me close with some excerpts of Bible commentators on this passage, which I think you will see to be consistent with the foregoing.

- Barnes: *Even so early as the time of Abraham, it would seem that the future blessedness of the righteous was foretold under the image of a splendid city reared on permanent foundations.*
- Jamieson-Faussett-Brown: *[W]hose builder and maker—Greek, "designer and master-builder," or executor of the design. The city is worthy of its Framers and Builder.*
- Poole: *Whose builder and maker is God; the happy fabric, with persons and state, endures for ever, because of its Raiser and Founder. The great Architect, that cast the plot and model of it in his own mind, and the publicly declared Operator and Raiser of it, who laid the foundations, reared the mansions, and finished the whole, is no less person than the infinitely wise, almighty, and eternal God. It all became him alone, and doth as far exceed other cities as God doth men. No human art or power was fit or capable for such a work, but only God.*

I love you. Amen!



Nebuchadnezzar II by William Blake

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (Galatians 6:3). He literally mentally deceives himself and his own heart. (James 1:26).

So we look briefly at Nebuchadnezzar, called the “greatest King of ancient Babylon.” See https://www.ancient.eu/Nebuchadnezzar_II/ From Daniel Chapter 4, verses 28-37:

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.