

We All Start Out Pagans

Genesis 11:29-32

29 Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. 30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. 32 So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran. NKJV

Joshua 24:2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. NKJV

Joshua 24:14 (NKJV) 14 "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

The world in which Abram lived was not a good world. The passage today comes a little over 400 years after the flood. Man has multiplied on the earth and their wickedness has once again filled the earth. One of the first sins of man was to turn away from the true God to worship idols.

Ro 1:20–23 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Abram was a descendant of Shem, the godly offspring of Noah. This family stayed true to God more than the others but was still subject to error.

There was not much of a revelation from God at this point, at least that we know of. God has revealed Himself along the way to some men but not very many.

Man's natural tendency is to turn away from God, not toward Him. But the good part of the story today is that God shows up and calls Abram out from among his family and begins to set apart a people from whom He will bring a redeemer.

Abram will be greatly blessed by God and Abram's offspring will also be blessed, simply because they are the children of Abram.

But the part we want to see this morning is that it was because God sought out Abram that Abram would be blessed. It is not because Abram sought after God.

Our case is the same. We did not pursue God, He pursued us.

- I. The call may have first went out to Terah, Abram's father.
 - A. 31 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.
 - B. So little is revealed but it does seem that they intended to "go to the land of Canaan."
 1. Some people think that the call came to Abram while they were in "Ur of the Chaldeans"
 - a. If this is so then Abram was not totally obedient.
 - b. He left the Ur but stopped before he got to where he was going.
 - c. This may have been because he took Terah and the rest of his family with him.
 - d. That was exactly what God told him not to do.
 - e. We must understand that God did not choose Abram because he was perfect.
 - C. There are others that think that the call went out to Terah to go to Canaan.
 1. If this was the case, why did they stop before getting very far from home.
 2. We do not know.
 3. They stopped in Haran.
 - a. Associated with the Babylonian moon-god Sin since the Ur III period (ca. 2000 B.C.), Haran remained a focus of lunar cults well into the Christian period, Myers, A. C. (1987). In *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
 4. And this is where Terah dies.
 5. Not everyone who receives a call from God follows through with it.
 6. Some start but do not finish.
 7. Others do not start at all.
 8. Jesus tells several parables that illustrate this point.
 - a. Matt 22: 1 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 "and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 "Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell

those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding." 5 "But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 "And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

b. Luke 14:16 "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 "and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' 18 "But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' 19 "And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' 20 "Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 "So that servant came and reported these things to his master.

9. Regardless of your situation, there is nothing more important than a divine call from the Almighty.

II. It appears that before God revealed Himself that Terah and Abram were not worshipers of Yahweh.

A. So says Joshua some 400 years later.

1. Joshua 24:2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. NKJV

2. Joshua 24:14 (NKJV) 14 "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

3. Joshua knows the tendency of people to forsake the LORD.

4. So he challenges them to not worship either the gods that they worshiped in Egypt or the gods that their ancestors worshiped before the call of Abram.

B. We should not be shocked by this for we all start out pagans.

1. Even those born in Christian homes.

2. The influence of Christian parents should never be underestimated.

3. Nor should Christians not use all means at their disposal to bring their children to Jesus Christ.

4. In too many nominally Christian homes the parents do little for their

children's spiritual development and wonder what went wrong later.

5. Rom 3: 9 For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."
6. Rom 3:22 For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

III. God is pursuing you.

- A. The very fact that you are here this morning says that God is pursuing you.
 1. He loves you and desires you to love Him.
 2. He gave His Son to cleanse you and make you acceptable to Him.
- B. God pursued Abram and Abram followed.
 1. He believed.
 2. Ge 15:6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.
 3. Ro 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."
 4. Ga 3:6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."
 5. Jas 2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.
- C. Ga 2:16 "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Abraham believed God. That is what He is asking of you today.

The first element of a relationship is trust.

Do you trust God?

Have you trusted Him to the extent that you have surrendered your life to Him completely?