Abram 1 â?? a restless spirit

Description

What can we learn from this man Abram/Abraham? What we know is that he was a man who was determined to find God or at least find out if there was a God at all.

We know that he was from Ur of the Chaldees which is now modern day Babylon. With some research we are able to establish that Ur was a very materialistic and wealthy place and I am sure that this environment had something to do with shaping Abramâ??s life. Rather than spend too much time on whether this man actually existed or was just a myth, as some have suggested, I would like us to examine the dissatisfaction and enquiring mind and heart of the man. I believe that when we start on an exploration of this great man of scripture we will find answers to questions about faith and spiritual longing that will result in our lives being challenged and ultimately changed (see The Feasibility of change Tozer) so that we are able to communicate any experience of the divine and his working in our daily lives. As Peter says 1 Peter 3:15 â??Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain itâ?• .

So letâ??s start our journey in Acts 7:2-5. Just as a backdrop this chapter in Acts is the great defence of Stephen who the writer says was â??a man full of faith and powerâ?•. This is the chapter that really shows us how to defend our faith, it shows us that Stephen knew the scripture, had experienced the divine, that he knew God and that he was prepared to publicly display what he found to be true. When it comes to spirituality it is certainly true that no man or woman can really defend what they have not first experienced or encountered of God. So when we approach the subject of God and Spirituality we have to first have had an encounter with the divine, otherwise it is just empty academic words.

So here in Acts 7:2-5 we find Stephen starting his defence by giving a potted history of the Jews to the high priests of the Jewish synagogue, as if they did not know! What this tells us is that Stephen knew his history and more importantly he knew the scripture. I make this point as if any of us what to find God then scripture is where we must go as it is the only place where we will find personal stories and encounters that point us to the divine and spiritual nature that is God. We learn just as much about God in the white space as in the black letters.

Stephen defends what he is doing by demonstrating to the high priests that he is a man full of Spirit (Holy) and that his story is rooted in the experience of the great men of scripture down through the ages. What I want us to consider here in Acts is what Stephen says to the high priests, he points out that God was the instigator of everything in Abrahamâ??s life so for instance in Acts 7:2 â??God appeared to Abrahamâ?•, â??God spoke Get out of your country and into a land I will show youâ?•. God was the instigator not Abraham, Abraham listened and was obedient.

Now that we have set the backdrop I want to consider what it was that made Abram receptive to, and engage with a being or object that became known as the â??God of your father Abrahamâ?•, what was it that caused this man to â??look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is Godâ?• Hebrews 11:10. I want you to notice the tenses used in the KJV, â??he lookedâ?• this is an imperfect tense and is continuous in the past, he was always looking for something that had foundation,

something that he was certain was of God, or was God. This passage in Hebrews demonstrates something of the heart and desire of the man, he was not prepared to settle until he had found the reality of God and not just the here-say of God. He wanted to find the spirituality at the heart of the world he lived in for himself and not be content with what others around him were saying and demonstrating as god. He was a man who was not prepared to settle on a promise unless he had confirmation. We read in Genesis 15:8 KJV â??whereby shall I knowâ?• or NLT â??how can I be sureâ?•.

We are not told how old Abram was when he was taken by his father Terah from Ur to Haran but what we are told is that â??the Lord had said to Abram get outâ?¦â?• Genesis 12:1. This indicates that God and Abram had some kind of understanding and communication prior to him living in Haran. We are told that Abram was 75 years old (Genesis 12:4) when he acted on what God had said. I wonder what those intervening years were like between when God had originally spoken and when Abram actually acted on the command? I would expect there to have been a lot of questions and at times doubt and even loneliness as he wrestled with God and the meaning of life. Remember Abram was a restless soul, always looking and searching â??for a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is Godâ?•. What I am suggesting is that if we are to find God and find Him to have foundation we need a restlessness in our spirit which is always looking and searching for revealed truth straight from the heart of God.

What we see in Genesis 12:4-9 is that Abram packed up his belongings and sets out from Haran to continue on this journey of promise, a promise from almighty God. At the end of Genesis 12:6 and the beginning of Genesis 12:7 we read â??And the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appearedâ?¦ â??. At this point, what do we see? Do we see a hopeless situation? Do we begin to doubt the word of the Lord? Or do we take heart because in that place of absolute despondency we find that the all sufficient Jehovah appears and reassures us that all we can see is for our possession by the grace and mercy of God. Just because the land we pass through in life is occupied by people who do not know or who have never encountered our creative God does not mean we cannot claim it. We are told that Abram came into the land of Canaan and even passed through it and settled in Shechem the place of decision. We all have to come to this place in our lives, the place where we encounter God, the place where God says this is yours, I am giving it to you and your descendants. God continues to give down through the ages because God is a creative and giving God who brings us from bondage and slavery to Sin into a life that can be lived free from guilt to the glory of an ongoing Creator we call God.

It is at the point where God appears to Abram and says that he is going to give the land that he has just passed through to him we see that Abramâ??s immediate response is to build an altar. An altar is a marker that something special has happened, we all need these places where we meet God and where we lay down a memorial. The altar was built at Shechem, this was a place of decision for Abram and later in Israelâ??s history became a city of refuge. We all need cities of refuge, places we can go in time of need for protection and immunity. Places where God says you are safe, the place that becomes the place of remembrance, restoration and renewal.

Even after this encounter with God who promised Abram all he surveyed, he was still restless and we find him moving from Shechem still searching for the â??city that has foundationâ?• to the mountains east of Bethel and in Genesis 12:8 we read that Abram settled between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east and there he built another altar, another memorial to a God who Abram had come to know and trust. What is significant about this choice of dwelling, this place where Abram pitched his tent, was that

Bethel means â??House of Godâ?• (*the same place that Jacob, Abrahamâ??s Grandson, would later meet the same God and name the place â??Bethelâ?• the â??House of Godâ?• Genesis 28:17-19, an awesome place)* and Ai means â??ruinâ?• . So Abram was mid way between a free abundant secure life and a place of ruin. His life depended on a choice, choosing life, substance and security or choosing ruin. If he chose to go East he faced certain destruction. Interestingly as far back as the story of Cain and Abel we find Cain going east after he had committed the murder of his brother and the scripture says in Genesis 4:16 â??Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Edenâ?•. Any place East of Eden, Eden being the place that God chooses for your to pitch your tent in life here on earth, is a place that is not in or with the presence of God.

Abram pitched his tent in a place where he was fully reliant on God for his survival. Where have we pitched our tent?

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Category

1. Abraham
2. Characters

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