

Devotional Thoughts :: Abraham, My Friend_47

Abraham, My Friend_47 - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/30 7:06

Abraham, My Friend
The Making of a Praying Man_47

Righteous Abimelech?

The Bible tells a highly selective story. **And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.** (Joh 21:25 KJV) John tells us plainly how he made his selection; **But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.** (Joh 20:31 KJV) It is foundational part of Bible study to ask 'why was this recorded?' God has preserved records which have perpetual relevance; whole empires lived and died unrecorded in the scriptures but **these are written**... Genesis 20 is, on the face of it, just a tragic blip in the life of a great man so why is it 'recorded'?

The previous chapters have not only been more of Abraham's steps of faith but they have also been handling the question of a righteous God and His dealings with an unrighteous world. Genesis 20, to some degree, is continuing that examination. Abraham is on the move again. Perhaps Abraham could no longer settle within sight of the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah; perhaps he wanted to put some distance between himself and Lot's incestuous family. He heads south and west and arrives in Gerar. Gerar is in the territory that later was to be known as 'the land of the Philistines'. The lands now known as Lebanon, West Bank, Israel, Gaza were all originally known as 'the land of the Philistines'; in modern English, Palestine; although modern day Palestinians are not descendents of the Philistines. Later, in Genesis 26 their king is referred to as 'king of the Philistines' but it is unlikely that their king whose name is Abimelech was himself a Philistine and this is more likely to be a reference to territory rather than the people we later know as Philistines. His name is Semitic and means Father-King. Confused? I'll post an explanation here.

Abimelech appears on the scene with the same abruptness as Melchizedek and, like Melchizedek, he seems to have a knowledge of God. This was Abraham's mistake; he presumed otherwise. Abimelech asks what Abraham had seen which caused him to take this action. **And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place**... (Gen 20:11a KJV) Ah, 'I thought'... how much trouble those two words get us into! We find the words on the lips of Naaman (2Ki 5:11) and the troubled Psalmist (Psa 73:16) Of course, it's not wrong to 'think' but in spiritual matters it is essential to begin with revelation and move on to thought. Reversing this process is disastrous. So Abraham misjudges the situation; **the fear of God is not in this place.** I wonder how often we make the same misjudgement. We react to a circumstance, a place, a person and conclude 'it is God-forsaken'. This is always a misjudgement; there is no event, no place, no person who is God-forsaken.

Abraham's misjudgement creates a mental scenario; **and they will slay me for my wife's sake.** (Gen 20:11b KJV) What a well-trodden path this is. We misjudge, we build our expectations on our misjudgement, and we make our choices on the basis of it all. It happens to the best of us **For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.** (Gal 2:12 KJV) Perhaps when you have read this account you have been tempted to think 'Peter, what were you thinking of?' Well, we know what he 'was thinking of'. He was thinking about those who 'came from James' and no doubt ran his own mental scenarios. A misjudgement, an expectation of trouble, a course of action chosen to anticipate and head off the problem which in its turn causes a bigger problem than the original possibility. Those who have never made such misjudgements and taken disastrous decisions based on wrong expectations will not understand all this; the rest will know the feeling only too well. What did Abraham and Peter and the 'rest of us' leave out of our calculations? Only God! Often our plans to avoid trouble get us into more trouble than we could have imagined.

I think the inbreathing of God into Abraham's and Sarah's names must have had an amazing rejuvenating effect on both of them. The scriptural testimony is very consistent, both Abraham's and Sarah's reproductive powers were dead; **And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:** (Rom 4:19 KJV) and yet from the age of approx 137 to 175 Abraham f

athered 6 sons.(Gen 25) Perhaps the rejuvenating word produced physical and visible signs in Sarah; the fact is that Abimelech took her into his harem at 90 years of age. Abraham's fears seemed to have been justified.

The account continues with those words so loved by preachers 'But God...' In fact, for those who like such facts, this is the Bible's first use of the phrase. Against all the possibilities, probabilities and apparent inevitabilities of our calculations God intervenes and changes everything. Hallelujah. **But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.** (Gen 20:3 KJV) This is not a threat but an explanation. Moving towards the end of the chapter we find the record that **So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.** (Gen 20:17 KJV) It seems as though some fatal disease had gripped the royal court; this is the purpose of God's explanation to Abimelech. The reason he was at the point of death was because he had taken Sarah; **But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, you are about to die, for the woman whom you have taken; for she is a man's wife.** (Gen 20:3 MKJV) It seems that the contagion had spread beyond the royal courts; Abimelech pleads for his entire nation **But Abimelech had not come near her. And he said, Lord, will You also kill a righteous nation?** (Gen 20:4 MKJV)

We then have the account of a remarkable dream conversation between God and a heathen king in which the king claims that his nation is 'righteous' and God apparently agrees with him, at least in the person of the king. **Now Abimelech had not come near her. And he said, Lord, wilt thou slay even a righteous nation? Said he not himself unto me, She is my sister? And she, even she herself said, He is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in the dream, Yea, I know that in the integrity of thy heart thou has done this, and I also withheld thee from sinning against me. Therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.** (Gen 20:4-6 ASV) Here is a heathen king with 'a pure heart and clean hands' and 'therefore' (i.e. because of his integrity) God kept him from **sinning against me.** How does this fit into your theology? When God sees righteous intention He can preserve even a heathen king from sin. The implication is painful but inevitable; we sin because we want to.

Abimelech doesn't know it but he has crossed a line. God must keep this bloodline clear; the purpose of all these workings in the life of Abraham and Sarah is to culminate in the coming of the Seed, and concerning His descent and identity there must be no doubt. The child that Sarah is to bear must have no doubtful paternity. There are consequences which are not direct punishments but God can use to illustrate truth. Abimelech is about to hear something which will set Abraham apart from all others. Sometimes the consequences of our choices bring us into great danger but even here God will use the circumstances to teach us His ways. Abimelech's family and people stand in deadly danger and there is something that Abimelech must do and something which another must do. **Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.** (Gen 20:7 KJV) Abimelech must put right what he can put right, but the damage can only be undone by another; God's man.

We are beginning to see a change in the story of Abraham which we shall observe constantly in the next few meditations. Abraham will begin to be a revelation of God Himself and His character. This is how he will bring blessing to others, not in his own inherent ability but as a living revelation of God. Abimelech is now informed that salvation is through another whose relationship to God is now revealed and whose words will bring deliverance. It is an amazing description that God gives to this heathen king. The man whose wife must be restored is described thus; **he is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live** We shall dwell on some aspects of this statement as we discover God's preparations in the life of a praying man, but at this point we will just take the broad outline.

he is a prophet This is another Bible first; the first use of the word prophet. We have learned that the first occurrence of a word or an idea is often loaded with significance. Not everyone who prophesies is a prophet. I can drive a truck but I am not a truck-driver. I preach the gospel but I am not an evangelist. A prophet is a person who lives in this realm. His gifting has so percolated into his life and character that the two are almost indistinguishable. It is not possible to think of this man without thinking this is a prophet. What is a prophet? Well, in the simplest terms, he is a spokesman for another. He brings, not his own thoughts and solutions, but the words of another. He lives in such a relationship with his master that he is intimate with the way in which His master thinks. It is Abraham's many steps which have brought him to this place of nearness to his Master, and he will need to continue in the steps of that faith to maintain the relationship. He is not an ambassador sent abroad for long periods of time beyond the sound of his Master's voice; he lives in His presence. He knows His thoughts and has His ear. The prophet not only hears God; God hears the prophet. **he is a prophet and he will pray...** **How simply the sentence runs with its own sense of divine logic and inevitability. Did you expect it to say he is a prophet and he will prophesy to you...? No, he is prophet and he will pray** Genuine

e prophecy and genuine prayer have a common link; they are both born in revelation. Not speculation, not calculation, but revelation. Many will bring their 'prophetic words' arising from their own reactions to the moment, putting into words their own reasoning and conclusions, but genuine prophecy is born in revelation. Here is a neat little definition of a prophet; **(Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come, and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)** (1Sa 9:9 ASV). A prophet sees but He sees what God reveals.

Abraham was in this dilemma because his natural sight had misled him; **And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sarest thou, that thou hast done this thing?** (Gen 20:10 ASV) Now he would see beyond his natural vision into the heart and purpose of God and the vision would be translated into prayer, and not the prayer of aspiration but of power; **Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live** (Gen 20:7 KJV) Thus you may identify all true prophets.

Re: Abraham, My Friend_47 - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/11/30 9:29

Hi Bro. Ron,

Another masterpiece for God's Glory!

Can you expand a bit on this? I think we need to understand how the revelation comes about. You have eliminated what revelation is not, can we look at what revelation is.

Quote:
----- Many will bring their 'prophetic words' arising from their own reactions to the moment, putting into words their own reasoning and conclusions, but genuine prophecy is born in revelation

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/11/30 9:46

Quote:
-----Can you expand a bit on this? I think we need to understand how the revelation comes about. You have eliminated what revelation is not, can we look at what revelation is.

Hi Robert

as they say 'hold that thought'

I want to develop 'the prophet' in the next week or two and the nature of how s/he receives the word of God will be part of that. I think the essence is in that word Seer. The prophet is not a strategist, or a project leader, he is someone who 'sees'. There may well be processes leading to the moment but there will come a moment when he says within in himself ... ah, I see.

BTW this week's meditation marks a full year of sharing these things together. It has been an unspeakable blessing to me and the more so to think that others have been blessed and challenged too.

I often read the words from the first one that Greg has now placed on the masthead. *This weekly column comes with my prayer that God will ignite both it and its readers to become true channels of His purpose in our generation.*

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/11/30 10:19

Quote:
-----BTW this week's meditation marks a full year of sharing these things together. It has been an unspeakable blessing to me and the more so to think that others have been blessed and challenged too.

Congradulations brother Ron! These contributions that you have worked on have become a weave and fabric of what SI is! I am glad that you have been able to do this column and also continue to do it. We WILL have to discuss about the book possibility very soon, it would be great to offer it to the SI viewers that have been following this column.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/11/30 10:59

Quote:
-----Congradulations brother Ron! These contributions that you have worked on have become a weave and fabric of what SI is! I am glad that you have been able to do this column and also continue to do it. We WILL have to discuss about the book possibility very soon, it would be great to offer it to the SI viewers that have been following this column.

Amen! Congratulations Bro. Ron the devotional has been a real inspiration.

God Bless,

-Robert