

## Chapter One

### *Abram's Promise*



SHELTERING IN OUR LOG CABIN of refuge, snug and safe, yesterday's storm has passed with the night. A new day dawns before us. Nourished in mind, body and soul we have gratefully received the kind hospitality of the person we call This Man, for we do not know his name. This Man is our guide to true spiritual enlightenment found only in God.

With the dawning light, we too shall pass from Book Two into Book Three in the series, *The King and His Son*. But first we shall revisit Book Two and refresh our memories with a brief overview of Planet Earth's first era of life:

In the beginnings of Book Two we learned how Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit growing on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their choice left God no alternative. He had lovingly explained the guidelines for life, had allowed Satan to test Adam's and Eve's loyalty to God, and Adam and Eve had been tempted and deceived into deadly consequences. A sobering lesson for us all. Being deceived when we know and understand right from wrong does bring consequences. And so evil and death entered into the world. And alas their sin opens the way for Satan and his army of demons to claim the world as their domain.

God promises Adam and Eve, that a deliverer shall arrive in the world and wage holy war against the spiritual forces of darkness. This Man tells us the deliverer is the Son of the great King.

"Yet four thousand years must pass before the Son descends to Planet Earth. As the new world evolves, evil escalates at an alarming pace; Satan almost controls the world! And thus God intervenes, warning the wicked population to stop their evil ways or He will destroy them with a great flood of water. But alas the majority mock God and reap their choice."

We think to ourselves that perhaps it is best that we do not know the depths of wickedness the pre-Flood world stooped to.

"Sheltered in a massive boat called an ark only eight humans - Noah and his family, and some animal life - are saved. Eventually the ark rests on solid ground and a new era of Planet Earth begins, this side of the Great Flood.

As the new world's population grows in a new, vastly different environment, evil escalates yet again.

From the mountains of Ararat the people migrate onto the plain of Shinar. As one people, speaking one language they begin to build a sky scraper to make a name for themselves, above God's authority. So to stem the tide of evil once again the great King intervenes, causing the people to speak foreign languages. Instantly the building site becomes a hive of great confusion and construction stops. Separating into mighty groups of people who speak the same language, the population leaves the unfinished tower of Babel to spread over the globe we call Planet Earth.

Thus in today's world we have many peoples, cultures and nations speaking multiple languages and believe it or not all these have their origin from the times of Babel."

As This Man pauses, we begin to wonder what happens in the times after the nations migrate from Babel? With opened minds we eagerly ponder the mass migration from Babel into the unexplored regions of the beckoning world.

What adventures the people must encounter on their wayfaring journeys and how exciting to be a part of their unfolding history!

As though reading our wondering thoughts, This Man rises from his seat and with an answering gesture he unlatches the cabin door. As the door swings open, sunlight streams a welcome warmth into our lives. Embracing the outdoors again, filling our lungs with refreshing air, This Man leads us through the ever widening vista of nations, culture and peoples.

Joining the surging migration from Babel, we venture with them into changing times and places. Speaking their own languages, the divided peoples settle in distant lands, scattered communities flourish evolving into many diverse nations.

In every direction we behold Satan's systems of pagan religion sweeping like wildfire among the populations. We feel the intense heat from the burning conflict between God's light of good and Satan's dark reign of evil.

The stark question looms before us with disturbing reality. Is the world regressing yet again into the oblivion of Planet Earth's first era of wickedness? Must God intervene again on behalf of sinful humanity to quell Satan's evil plan to dominate the world over and above all that is good and true in God?

Searching the seething corruption before us, we search for God's faithful believing people living His ways of holy living. Perhaps in these troubled times the faithful believers are hidden from our view, praying to God, asking Him to manifest His Holy Spirit of regenerating life throughout the heathen lands.

One thing is certain, bound by our own limited humanity we are utterly powerless to offer any solutions to the dire situation raging before us. Yet, like a messenger bearing good tidings from God, facing down Satan's heathen nations, This Man boldly announces a declaration of buoyant hope. Surging with God's spirit of power This Man's voice echoes through distant landscapes, times and places.

"The great King and His only begotten Son have a plan. A far reaching plan that involves a nation of their own. And their nation of buoyant hope begins with just one humble man. A Godly man named Abram, meaning '*man of greatness*'.

Living in Ur of the Chaldeans, Mesopotamia, Abram is surrounded by peril. Not so much by poverty, or war, but by the evils of pagan worship. Yes, the people of Ur are caught up in satanic practice. Enshrined in their homes are stone gods and goddesses and from these they seek guidance in daily worship.

More and more Abram seeks a better way of life and more and more his mind is drawn to the true Creator of heaven and earth.

*For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. Psalm 96:5  
...The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth... Isaiah 40:28*

Little does Abram know his belief in God will change his life dramatically and forever. One day he hears God's voice telling him to move away from his homeland and live apart from his family.

*Now the LORD had said to Abram:*

*'Get out of your country,  
From your family  
And from your father's house,  
To a land that I will show you.  
I will make you a great nation;  
I will bless you  
And make your name great;  
And you shall be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
And I will curse him who curses you;  
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'* Genesis 12:1-3

Hearing God's command, Abram is truly astounded and perhaps his thoughts turn to questioning... 'What does God mean, "I will make you a great nation"?'

At age 75, the thought of leaving his homeland and his extended family seems very hard. But slowly a heavenly peace calms Abram's troubled soul and he knows he must obey the one and only true God.

*....The lord is the true God: He is the living God and the everlasting King.*

*Jeremiah 10: 10*

Yes above all earthly advantages he must entrust his life to the great King who holds the world in His hands.

*In His hand are the deep places of the earth; The heights of the hills are His also. The sea is his, for he made it; and his hands formed the dry land. Psalm 95:4-5*

Very soon news of Abram's command from God sweeps through the family.

Perhaps they begin to question, 'Who is this strange God who has spoken directly to Abram?' And, 'Our gods and goddesses have never appeared to us in any living form let alone spoken to us in the way this new God has spoken to Abram.'

Abram's nephew, Lot, hears the astounding news and his mind is stirred by his uncle's convictions to follow God's call. Lot's father is dead and over time a special bond has grown between Abram and his nephew. You see Abram and his wife have no children and so Lot has become like a son to them. Lot contemplates his own life without his uncle. One truth crystallizes in Lot's mind, that Uncle Abram's God is full of life far above the gods and goddesses made of lifeless stone.

And so seeking more of his uncle's God and perhaps a little adventure too, Lot joins Abram as he prepares for the move of his life. Now Terah, Abram's elderly father is also moving with his son and grandson. And so gathering all their possessions, flocks and herds, Abram obeys God's call. Bidding farewell to the past, the company of believers journey to the land of Haran.

And while living in Haran, Abram's father Terah passes away to his rest at the grand old age of 205.

*...The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him,*

*'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.'* Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. Acts 7:2-4

Thus once again Abram and his small tribe of people pack up their belongings and taking their livestock journey into the future. Eventually they arrive in the land of Canaan.

*Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said,*

*‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. Genesis 12:6-7*

*Now, Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. Genesis 13:2*

Abram has many herdsmen and servants to care for his livestock and earthly possessions, and now seeking pasture for the animals, Abram becomes a nomadic farmer journeying through pagan nations as God leads the way. As he journeys where God guides, Abram is a living example of God’s righteous ways to the heathen peoples of the different lands.

*‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God. James 2:23*

Journeying on through life, Abram the friend of God has many adventures. Eventually as time passes, Lot separates from his uncle and goes his own way.

*...Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. So Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right: or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.’ And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. Genesis 13: 5-11*

Did you notice Abram’s humble attitude and hospitable spirit toward his young nephew? No wonder Abram was called the friend of God.

But very soon Lot reaps the consequences of his choice. For you see one eventful day Lot is taken captive by a force of invading kings. Upon hearing this terrible news Uncle Abram comes to the rescue.

*Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.*

*And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.*

*Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said:*

*'Blessed be Abram of God Most High,  
Possessor of heaven and earth;  
And blessed be God Most High,  
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.'  
And he gave him a tithe of all. Genesis 14:14-20*

*Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. Hebrews 7:4"*

As we behold the transactions made between Abram and Melchizedek, we too consider the meaning of the word "tithe" and why Abram gave a tenth of his bounty to the priest Melchizedek king of Salem.

This Man answers our inquiring thoughts.

"Hmmm, I see the question you ask. Yes, through Abram's obedient life, God unfolds to the world His support system called 'tithe'. Tithe equals one tenth of a person's income.

*... Abraham gave a tenth part of all... Hebrews 7:2*

Indeed the great King, the all provider of life desires for us to return to Him one tenth of our goods and income, with a willing and loving spirit: A holy tithe belonging to our Creator God.

*For the Lord is the great God,  
And the great King above all gods. Psalm 95:3  
The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness,  
The world and those who dwell therein. Psalm 24:1*

And this is a pleasure and solemn privilege to give tithe to God, so His gospel ministry is sustained and built up in the world. For you see, money from tithe provides an income for those people who are fully employed in God's health and spiritual work.

*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.' 1 Timothy 5:17-18*

Therefore faithfulness in paying tithe and offerings to God's work is vitally important. An offering is a portion of money or goods we give to God, in appreciation for all the good things He has bestowed in our lives. In fact with a willing and loving spirit, we pay tithe and offerings to the great King and His Son as our duty. Centuries after Abram's death, God challenges the Israelite nation with these solemn words:

*'Will a man rob God?  
Yet you have robbed Me!  
But you say,  
"In what way have we robbed You?"  
In tithes and offerings.  
You are cursed with a curse,  
For you have robbed Me,  
Even this whole nation.  
Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,  
That there may be food in My house,  
And try Me now in this,  
Says the LORD of hosts,  
If I will not open for you the windows of heaven  
And pour out for you such blessing  
That there will not be room enough to receive it. Malachi 3:8-10*

Yes indeed when we faithfully return our tithe and offerings to God, He deposits even richer blessings in our lives.

## WHAT IS STRENGTH?

Everyone wants STRENGTH. Can you think of anyone who doesn't want to be strong in mind, body, character or spirituality? For when we are strong we think and move more quickly, enjoy our work and responsibilities, are happier, have more clarity of mind for understanding God's way, and more energy to strengthen our relationship with God the Father and His only begotten Son Jesus Christ by reading our Bibles and praying - daily.

STRENGTH in Book 3, and on the Vital Force NZ website is an acronym: Every letter of STRENGTH stands for something. We believe STRENGTH was given by God and STRENGTH has been used for education purposes, for healthy lifestyle programmes and cookery classes, and explained in a series of books. Excerpts have been republished on the Vital Force NZ website.

We believe God has now inspired us, in these last days, to explain, expand, update and share STRENGTH, starting in this book. This is so you, dear reader, can sow seeds of health in your life and in the lives of others as we prepare ourselves for the times ahead. Praise God the Father and His only begotten Son, that They love and care SO much for every one of us.

The acronym STRENGTH is a simple but powerful way to:

- Learn about why a healthy lifestyle is vital at this time;
- Assess your health and lifestyle;
- Find out what is lacking in your lifestyle;
- Help you work through health and lifestyle related challenges;
- Grow stronger daily!

WHY is STRENGTH so important at this time in the world?

We are in the end times of this dying world. That might sound powerful and scary, but we know for sure we have moved into the end times of the world from information throughout the Bible, but especially in the books of Daniel and the Revelation in the Bible.

As people living in the end times of the world, we are in the time of preparation. This prepping isn't storing up years of food and water. This preparation is of the heart, a time to self-examine. A time to draw closer to God day by day through reading our Bibles and praying!



You see, although people have told me this is VERY HARD to believe, the way you take care of your own health affects the quality of your relationship with God the Father and His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour! If your brain isn't clear and strong, how will you clearly understand the Bible and communicate with God?

You might be wondering WHY having a strong relationship with God is important at this time in the world. Maybe you have been told that all is well, and that soon enough the world's events will settle down again. Well my friend, I don't want to burst your bubble, but the Bible tells us that the signs we hear, see and read about are just the BEGINNINGS of troubles. I guess that means there are going to be many, many more troubles such as floods, heatwaves, and disasters triggered by weather events such as crop failures, wildfires, disease epidemics, insect, bird and animal death and extinction, as well as earthquakes and erupting volcanoes. There will be more wars, more suffering, more disease, more manmade disasters and diseases too. There will be government rules put in place that APPEAR to make life safer for people, but will force a choice upon us all.

If you choose God's way and stand under His banner, you will worship on the biblical seventh day Sabbath and you will worship God the Father and His only begotten Son. If you choose God's way, sooner or later you will not be able to buy and sell.

That means as part of our preparation for the times ahead, every one of us needs to understand how to be as healthy as possible NOW, and strive to live a clean lifestyle that suits our individual makeup. The healthier we are NOW, the closer and stronger we can be in our communication with God, to hear His messages in His word in the Bible and and through prayer. The more we are willing to live His way, the more he can bless our efforts. Simple really, isn't it?

The next column will lay out STRENGTH. Then chapter by chapter we will dig into each lifestyle factor, and sprinkle seeds of health from around the world throughout. Maybe a few health seeds will inspire you to experiment, to sow and germinate in your life!

Are you ready?

This is the Son's faithful promise to each of us today.

*Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. Luke 6:38"*

Now This Man pauses for a moment to expose before us a word of solemn warning. A warning that may be quite surprising to some, and yet to others a benumbing experience they have personally encountered. With a note of righteous indignation emanating from his words, This Man continues.

"Now believe it or not, while coveting monetary gain some Christian churches and ministries abuse the income of tithe and free will offerings given by their congregation. Believing in a gospel of prosperity at the expense of their congregations, some ministering leaders heap to themselves an income far exceeding their biblical entitlement, while financially the poor among them struggle to make ends meet. Surely this practice of distributing wealth from tithe and offerings is ethically, morally and spiritually wrong in the sight of God bringing dishonour upon His system of tithe and offerings, and especially upon His holy name.

And so having duly returned a tenth of his spoil to God, Abram with his band of warriors return to the eagerly awaiting camp. Following God's leading, Abram and his people continue their journey toward the South. And true to human nature very soon Abram faces a test which reveals a hidden flaw in his character.

*Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, 'Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, "This is his wife"; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.'*

*So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels. But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, "She is my sister"? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way.' So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent*

*him away, with his wife and all that he had. Genesis 12:9-20*

What an escape for Abram and especially his wife Sarai. God is good, even in times when we lack trust and bring dishonour upon His holy name! But sadly the great consequence fell on Pharaoh's life. For you see through Abram's visit to Egypt God had planned to reveal His Divine majesty to Pharaoh and touch his pagan life with heavenly knowledge. But Abram had looked to his own thoughts, instead of trusting God. And so the lost opportunity passes into eternity and Abram moves on.

And now the next chapter in Abram's life unfolds, furthering God's plan in growing a great nation.

*After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' But Abram said, 'Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' Then Abram said, 'Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!' And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.' Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' Genesis 15:1-5*

Perhaps Abram speaks to Sarai his wife, explaining the extraordinary promise God made to him, that his descendents were to become a great nation.

Perhaps Abram and Sarai wondered how the promise could possibly be fulfilled, for Sarai is well past the generally accepted child bearing age. Perhaps Sarai feels dreadfully guilty that she cannot bear children, perhaps she feels as if she has let her husband down, and suddenly, amidst the turmoil of emotion, a thought springs into Sarai's mind.

*"Now Sarai said to Abram, 'See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.*

*Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.*

*So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.*

*Then Sarai said to Abram, 'My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your em-*

*brace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.'*

*So Abram said to Sarai, 'Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.'*

*And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.*

*Now the Angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.*

*And He said, 'Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?' She said, 'I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.'*

*The Angel of the Lord said to her, 'Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.'*

*Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, 'I will multiply your descendents exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.'*

*And the Angel of the Lord said to her:*

*'Behold, you are with child,*

*And you shall bear a son.*

*You shall call his name Ishmael,*

*Because the Lord has heard your affliction.*

*He shall be a wild man;*

*His hand shall be against every man,*

*And every man's hand against him.*

*And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.'*

*Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, 'Have I also here seen Him who sees me?' Therefore the well was called Meer Lahai Roi, observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

*So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.*

*Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. Genesis 16:1-16*

*And just as God promised, in centuries to come, Ishmael's descendents multiply into the Islamic nations of the world, with their own Islamic religion. And down*

through the centuries of time, the Islamic nations feature in Bible prophecy, even to our times.

But wait! While Ishmael's descendants shall eventually multiply into nations, yet still God has great surprises to reveal to Abram and Sarai.

*God said to Abram "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. Genesis 17:5*

*Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' Genesis 17:15-17*

Even though Abraham laughs in disbelief, is anything too hard for God?

When Sarah learns of God's promise, that she shall bear a child in her old age, she also laughs.

*Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' And the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?" Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.' Genesis 18:11-14*

Meanwhile, Abraham journeys on with his people, and they enter the kingdom of King Abimelech. Incredibly Abraham is about to face exactly the same challenge he experienced in the past with Pharaoh of Egypt. Once again the issue is one of trust – will Abraham trust God to protect his marriage to Sarah, or will Abraham give into fear for his own life?

*And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.' And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, 'Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.' But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, 'Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? Did he not say to me, "She is my sister"?' And she, even she herself said, "He is my brother." In the integrity of my heart and*

*innocence of my hands I have done this.’ And God said to him in a dream, ‘Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.’*

*So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, ‘What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.’ Then Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?’ And Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, “This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’*

*Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, ‘See, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you.’ Then to Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who are with you and before everybody.’ Thus she was rebuked.*

*So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife. Genesis 20:1-18*

**Yes indeed God is very, very good. And just as God promised, Sarah also conceives and gives birth to a son.**

*And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. Genesis 21:1-3*

**And so the years pass by in Abraham’s bustling encampment and Isaac happily grows in his father’s life style. But little does Abraham realise, due to his past failures to honour God before Pharaoh and King Abimelech he is about to undergo a severe**

test. The test at hand is to see if Abraham has learned to trust God in every situation, and thus prove himself trustworthy to become the genetic father of a holy nation. And this test involves the life of Abraham's special son of promise.

One day, when Isaac reaches the prime of youth God commands Abraham to offer up his son for a burnt offering upon an altar of sacrifice.

*Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." Genesis 22:1-2*

Ah, the ultimate test. Willingly, Abraham would give up his own life. But to take the life of his precious son is a far different matter.

Perhaps Abraham questions. 'Has God forgotten that Isaac is the son of my old age, the son of promise to carry forward the righteous seed to grow His holy nation?' The outlook seems very bleak indeed and beyond all human reasoning. Yet God has commanded and this time His voice must be obeyed at all cost. And so early one morning before Sarah has risen, Abraham wakes his son and tells him that they must go and offer sacrifice to God on the mountain.

*So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Genesis 22:3*

As father and son make their journey each weary step weighs heavily upon Abraham's aching heart.

*Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.' So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' So the two of them went together.*

*Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; Genesis 22 4:9*

Now it is Isaac's test, for with breaking voice Abraham tells his son that God has



commanded to offer up his life for a burnt offering. In quiet contemplation young Isaac stands before his elderly father. In a moment he could make a sudden dash and easily escape. But revealing perfect trust in God, Isaac chooses to submit his life to his earthly father and without reserve entrust his life into the hands of his heavenly Father, no matter what the outcome may be.

And so Abraham,

*...bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-WILL-PROVIDE; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided." Genesis 22:9-14*

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. Hebrews 11:17-19*

*Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Genesis 22:15-18*

Yes, with victorious faith and perfect trust in God, Abraham passes the test. And like never before Abraham realises the heart breaking experience of God the Father in giving up His own Son to die in the place of sinful humanity, in time to come.

The Father's only begotten Son must also face the testing time and submit His life to His Father's will.

*"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me: nevertheless not My will, but*



*Yours, be done.” Luke 22:42*

Eventually the Son will also carry the wood for sacrifice, the wooden cross of death.

*And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the place of a Skull, which is in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him... John 19:17-18*

But sinful man will not merely tie His hands but nail them fiercely to the cross.

*For dogs have surrounded Me: the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet: Psalm 22:16*

At this decisive hour there will be no other substitute to take His place for He is the true Lamb of God, man's one and only hope.

*...Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29*

Yes from His heavenly mountain, God the Father will provide a lamb for sacrifice in the dear life of His only begotten Son. His own Son of promise. Thus together Father and Son walk the death trail to Golgotha, and pay the ultimate price to ransom fallen humanity from sin and everlasting death.

*... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1: 18-19*

*For you were bought at a price; 1 Corinthians 6:20*

*The-LORD-WILL-PROVIDE; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided.’ Genesis 22:14”*

A hush of gratitude stills our gathered group, as we ponder the greatest gift ever given to human life. We lift our eyes skyward and our thoughts of praise spiral through God's cosmic space and onward through the open gates of heaven entering the throne of the great King. And in return with equal wonder, rays of heavenly light beam from God's throne of grace, flooding our unworthy soul with His love and acceptance. And so stilled in this aura of meetings This Man continues to unfold before us Abraham's and Sarah's lives.

Eventually at age 127 years, Sarah passes to her rest.

*Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. Genesis 24:1*

And so in the closing years of his life Abraham sends his trusted elderly servant back to the family homeland to find a wife for Isaac. Thus guided by God in the right choice of a bride the servant returns with,

*... Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother... Genesis 24:15*

*Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for He dwelt in the South. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening: and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming. Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; for she had said to the servant, Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Genesis 24:67*

*And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines who Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.*

*This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people... Genesis 25:5-8*

And so Abraham's and Sarah's extraordinary lives come to a close.

In your own Bibles you can read the full account of their lives in the book of Genesis chapters 12- 25."

This Man pauses in our midst, conveying respect and honour to Abraham's and Sarah's God-led lives. We secretly consider, could it be true that in all our earthly wanderings we too are a part of God's great plan however inconspicuous we may be? Could we too be the apple of His eye?

With spiritual insight to our lives This Man assures us with all certainty, each one of us is a precious gift of life fulfilling God's plan, unfolding through all eternity.

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. James 1:17*

Yes without variation, the King and Son's life spirit flows through the generations of human life and they remain the same forever.

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Hebrews 13:8*

Now we shall follow on in Isaac's footsteps, and discover where they lead, in the birthing of God's nation."