**Origins (pt.2) - wk 2 – Baby Steps**

**The OT is the sign to the Messiah - NT is the arrival of - JESUS.**

**Genesis to Revelation it is about Jesus.**

**The first, Genesis, means “Beginning / Origin”**

**What we quickly discover is the darkness of the human heart.**

**\*\* Sin is deep in the human heart, and we desperately need a savior**

**Last week, A new beginning – the beginning of the way.**

**A down and outer idol worshiper whose family is falling apart is challenged by God to follow him.**

**Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD (YHVH) said to Abram, (Abraham) “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.**

**No home. No land. No children. A man named father, married to a barren, contentious wife. Father is dead, brother is dead. Life is jacked up – He was far from God and not interested.**

**But God says, “I choose you. Come and follow me.” Why would he do that? Grace! Why would God pick a reject? Because he was a reject?**

**\*\*\* This is *the* recurring theme in Abe’s life – grace and faith.**

**God still does this today! Jesus works in hopeless and helpless situations – using the most unlikely people.**

**Abe is given 5 promises - Genesis 12:2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Unpacked it last week)**

**Abram heard God's voice, “No, thanks. I don’t even know you” What follows is a profound - the first step to the Messiah.**

**Gen 12:4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him…**

**Leaving his comfort not for a person but for God.**

**He knows little to nothing about God & starts walking.**

**Abraham leaves: It starts out great – but quickly goes downhill.**

**We are quickly reminded he is not the savior.**

**Gen 12:4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. (his grown nephew) Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. (anyone here 75?) 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, (before name change) and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, (servants – hired hands) and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.**

**God says leave everything - you and Sari come with me.**

**He says okay… but I’ll just take this…**

**He took Lot / He took his possessions / He took his servants.**

**We do the same. Jesus says, “Come follow me, leave it all.” Yes, Lord, I’ll leave it all… except this and this… this… this.**

**(Map – so they head out) When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land. (independent tribes w/ family leaders)**

**He sets out with a Bible that only has three verses.**

**The first place he goes is the Cannanite Oracle tree. (pic)**

**Terebinth tree (pistachio) can thrive in the desert - up to 1000 yrs – and amazingly keep growing when you cut them down.**

**The tree of Moreh - means oracle/teacher. It was believed to be a place to hear directions in the wilderness.**

**Altar 1 - 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring, I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD,**

**400 years before Moses - no established process of worship. He did what he knew unto the LORD – and he appeared.**

**who had appeared to him.**

**The listeners would have been shocked! (The first appearance of God to Abe and to men) These are Theophany/Christophany**

**(pic) The view from Shechem This will be your family's.**

**Remember what I told you. This is the place - One day = Israel.**

**Altar 2 - 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. (location) And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb. (Map)**

**Everywhere he stops, he has a church – he starts off strong.**

**He immediately develops a life of worship and honor of God.**

**He did not know much about the LORD – but he knew God deserved worship and praise.**

**So they pitched their tents and settled into the land. And lived happily ever after… but that was just the prologue – what follows is OT drama.**

**(years later) Gen 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land. (he had been living in Canaan – they could starve – die. But I am supposed to be a father of nations) So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. (To live near food and resources)**

**(Pic) The move to the big city: The country boy moves to New York!**

**Egpyt, in the bible, was considered a wicked city.**

**Realize - Moses is writing this to people who were just delivered from there. Why would you go there? We just left.**

**11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, “I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, (Ahh how nice - worried that his 60 yr old beautiful wife without kids would draw attention – middle age, equivalent to 40s)**

**(After he complements her…) 12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.”**

**Hey, beautiful, I need you to lie for me. If something goes bad for you, it’s bad for you - so it's really for your sake.**

**What’s the father of faith lying for and why was he so afraid?**

**14 When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. (This unfolded most likely over several weeks) And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. (after conversations and lies - added to concubine)**

**Her womb was to be set aside for the promise of God,**

**but he just prostitutes his wife out**

**Instead of trusting that God would provide and keep them safe – he takes it into his own hands (which he does a lot).**

**16 And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.**

**Sounds like it worked, but God was not along for the lie.**

**17 But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 So Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? (after an epidemic broke out - He did some digging and found out that she was the wife)**

**19 Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? (sadly, God used a pagan king to rebuke Abe) Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go.” 20 And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. (I want nothing to do with you - take it and go!)**

**(Pic) Gen 13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. 2 Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. (Wealth through lies)**

**At first it seemed his lies all worked out - maybe you have been there. God must have used it or winked at it.**

**As you read you’ll notice a pattern of lying that came back to bite him. Sowing seeds of lies – that resulted in chaos & death.**

**We will pick this up next week.**

**The Stumbler**

**1. God still meets us at humble places**

**(At Shechem) Genesis 12:7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring, I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.**

**At a humble desert tree - God first appeared to man (since Adam).**

**Shechem became a place of prominence in the OT for this reason.**

**Abe will return often. His descendants will meet there to make major decisions and seek God.**

**At that humble place – God spoke again and again.**

* **Jacob bought the land for his family, who fathers the 12 tribes.**
* **Jacob builds an altar - El Elohe Israel,” or “mighty God of Israel”**
* **Years after Egypt – Jospeh's bones were buried there.**
* **Where Joshua read and renewed their faith – “As for me…”**
* **It was where Joshua said his goodbyes before he passed.**
* **Where Gideon was called by God – in judges.**
* **It became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.**
* **1000 years later, Jesus spoke to a woman at the well at that same place. God says I have not forgotten you. (John 4)**

**\*\*\*\* In humble broken places – Jesus still meets us.**

**Pro 15:33 The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor. // Pslam 149:4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. // James 4:6 “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” // 1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. // Luke 14:11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” // Pro 22:4 Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life.**

**To seek God and find grace and salvation is to come in humility.**

**2. Sometimes God speaks – sometimes we just need to be faithful**

**Altar 1 – God appeared and spoke.**

**Altar 2 – He cried out to the LORD and heard nothing.**

**Gen 12: 8b And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram journeyed on…**

**What did Abe do when he heard nothing? He held tight to what God said previously and kept moving forward.**

**\*\* We won’t always have a clear voice, but we have already been given clear direction.**

**Want to know something deep - The Word of God - is God’s Word.**

**Abraham only had a three-verse Bible. Five promises.**

**And that was what he followed - and that was God’s Word!**

**God has spoken to us more than Abe and Moses and all the prophets together. God has spoken (the Bible) - follow it! It is alive!**

**You may cry out and hear nothing – try opening this up and listening. Whether we know 3 verses or memorize 100 verses. Walk in what what you know. It is here – God has spoken.**

**3. Following our lead rather than God’s lead, leads to chaos.**

**God never said leave Canaan – Abe had not heard from God.**

**When famine hit, he took matters into his own hands.**

**Leaving rather than trusting God for provision and needs.**

**God called him to Canaan, not Egypt. This led to a snowball of poor decisions. A bad habit Abe will have for a while…**

**The struggle to follow the Lord’s plan, vs. our own plan.**

**The struggle of trusting the LORD or trusting ourselves is long.**

**Pr 14:12 There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death. Following our lead rather than God’s leads to chaos.**

**Another example of this… Rather than being transparent and trusting God to protect them, he lied. And forced his wife to lie and endure potential abuse.**

**Technically it was actually a half-truth - Gen 20:12 - His half-sister.**

**\*\* A half-truth is a whole lie. His purpose was deception.**

**We can convince ourselves to do anything wrong. “But, this is different. This is unique. Lying saves lives. It’s for their sake! God would understand.”**

**Cutting corners will always hurt others – it may not hurt you at first or the ones you love at first. But it will. Lies always hurt.**

**Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight. // Proverbs 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape.**

**We must be willing to trust God even when it does not make sense.**

**Ideally, he could have said, “God’s promises are true. I don’t have to be afraid. God will do what he says. God will protect us!!”**

**But he chose his plan over God - and lies over truth.**

**For now he got away with it – but the habits will kill millions.**

**His selfish plans - launch a nation that brings incredible wars.**

**Trusting God is a hard lesson.**

**But Abe lied (a lot) – how did he still end up being to honored?**

**Proverbs 28:13 Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. (there is good news for you!)**

**4. God is a master horticulturist (botanist - arborist)**

**He is an expert in the growing business.**

**While Abe is stumbling through his walk - he’s growing through his mistakes. God is maturing him and growing him – this is grace.**

**“Faith is not a mushroom that grows overnight in damp soil; it is an oak tree that grows for a thousand years under the blast of the wind and rain.” (Donald Barnhouse)**

**God graciously grew Abram into a man of faith. Abe was not there yet, but God knew what he was doing—and he does with us too!**

**Ephesians 1:6 Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

**5. God’s promises depend on God, not us**

**Here is something crazy: even when we miss the mark, God never misses. Even our stupidity accomplished God’s will.**

**Abram was blowin’ it! But God sustained Him. The promise did not depend on Abe. Rember God said – “I will…”**

**Our sin will never be overlooked, but his Word is solid as a rock. He will always do as he says!**

**Job 42:2 I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**

**Isaiah 14:24 - The LORD Almighty has sworn, “Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.**

**You can’t mess up God’s plans. Elections can’t, war can’t, economy can’t – divorce can’t. Because it does not depend on you.**

**God says I have a plan, and it can’t be stopped. None of them.**

**Honor God – follow his word – tell others - and sleep well.**

**6. We still have a place to meet with God**

**I want to end up going back to that 1st altar where God first appeared.**

**At the altars? A sacrifice for sin and calls out to God. The altar is a place of submission, reliance, and worship. A place to meet God.**

**\*\* We still have a place to meet with God today – where is it?**

**I am not talking about church, but the cross of Christ – the altar.**

**Hebrews 13:10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.**

**We have a greater altar – Christ himself! The animals were incomplete and only a sign that pointed to the blood of Jesus. The only place God can truly be found forever.**

**At this altar of the cross – we find the LORD and we worship!**

**Hebrews 13:15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.**

**There is a greater teaching tree in the wilderness - Jesus**

**There is a greater one who was called out of Egpyt – Jesus**

**There is a greater altar where God appears and meets us – Jesus**

**Are you looking for God? You might be able to hear of him in a church. You can see him in his creation and wonder.**

**But the only place to truly find and know him is at the altar of salvation – the cross of Christ. Where he died and rose.**