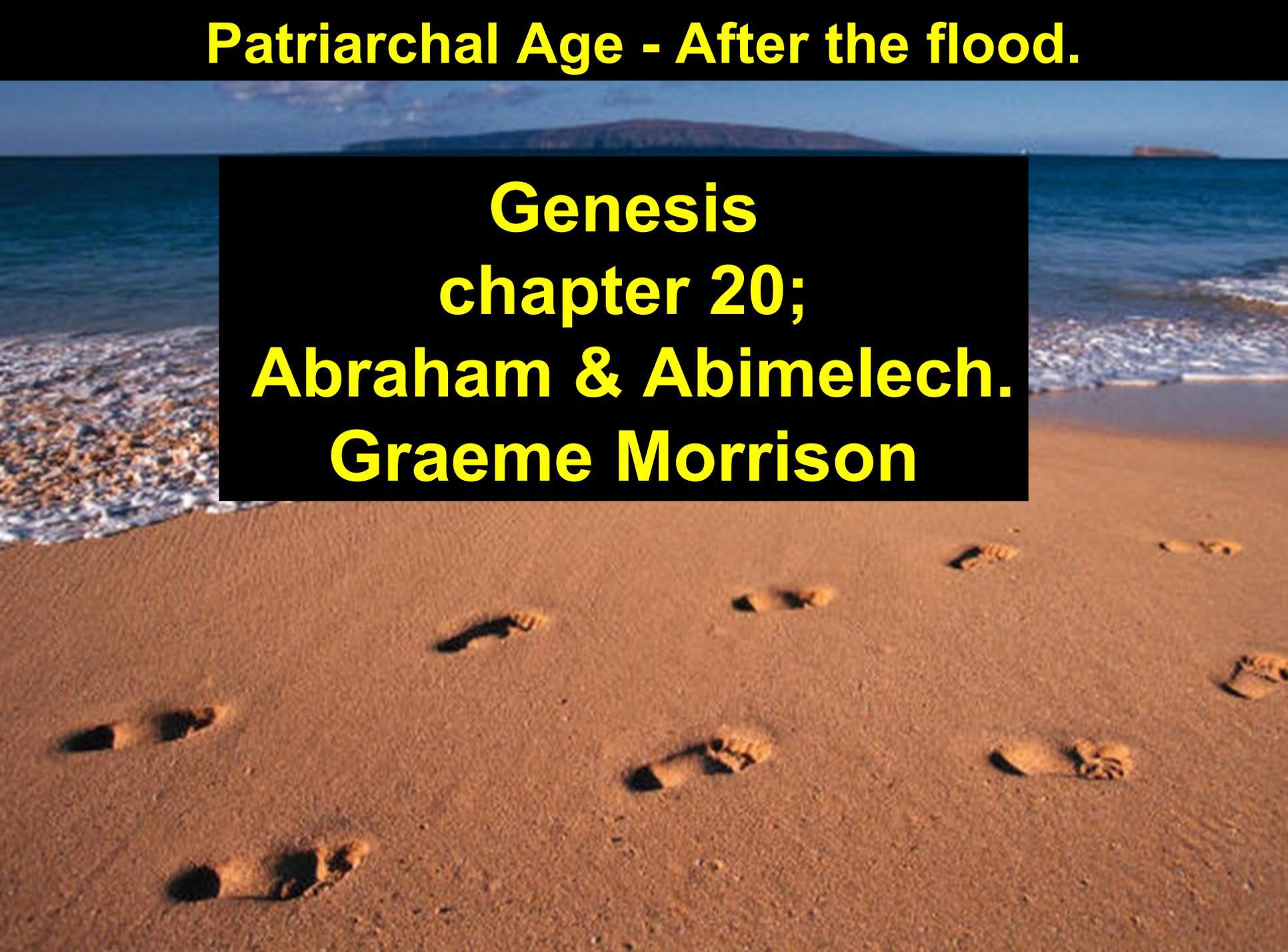


Patriarchal Age - After the flood.



**Genesis
chapter 20;
Abraham & Abimelech.
Graeme Morrison**

Abraham Lies To Abimelech.

**Abraham left the oaks of Mamre
and travelled to the Negeb. (20:1;)**

There he dwelt in Gerar.

Abraham said Sarah was his sister. (20:2;)

**Abimelech, king of Gerar,
took Sarah into his harem.**

Abraham and Abimelech. Genesis 20;

20:1 “Abraham left there for the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur.

While staying in Gerar,

2 Abraham said of his wife Sarah, ‘She is my sister,’ and Abimelech the king of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.”

3 “But God visited Abimelech in a dream one night. ‘You are to die,’ he told him, ‘because of the woman you have taken, for she is a married woman.’”

4 “Abimelech, however, had not gone near her; so he said, ‘Lord, would you kill someone even if he is upright?’”

5 “Did he not tell me himself, “She is my sister”? And she herself said, “He is my brother.” ‘I did this with a clear conscience and clean hands.’”

Abraham and Abimelech. Genesis 20;

**6 “‘Yes, I know,’ God replied in the dream,
‘that you did this with a clear conscience
and I myself prevented you from sinning against me.
That was why I did not let you touch her.’”**

**7 Now send the man's wife back; for he is a prophet
and can intercede on your behalf for your life.
But understand that if you do not send her back,
this means death for you and all yours.’”**

Gen 20:1; “Abraham left there for the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While staying in Gerar,”

The Negeb is the southern region of Israel that is sandwiched between the hill country of Judah to the north, the deserts of Zin, Shur, and Paran to the south, and the Dead Sea region to the east.

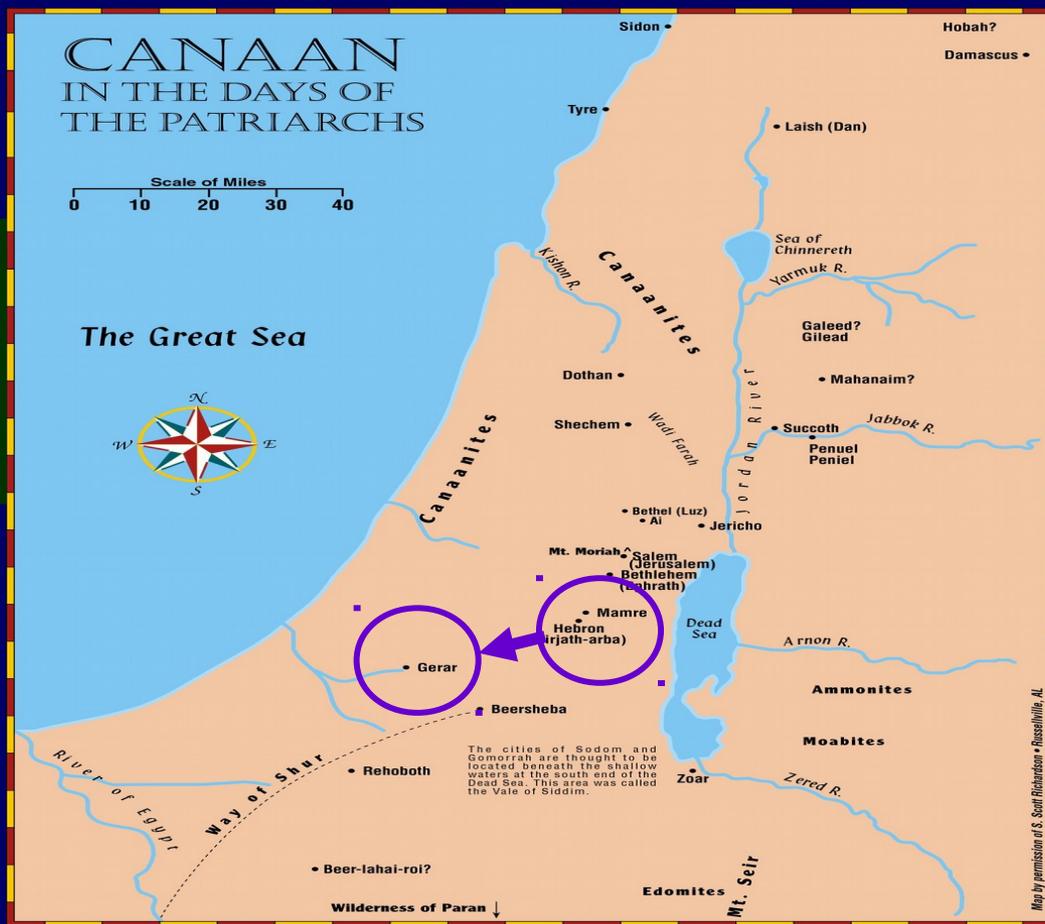
This open and rugged region has bushes but no forests, mild winters, followed by periodic rains, and hot, dry summers.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who lived a semi-nomadic existence, probably grazed their livestock in the desert-like Negeb during the winter, migrating north to the hill country around Bethel, Hebron, and Shechem in the summer.

Gen 20:1; “Abraham left there for the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While staying in Gerar,”

In Jesus' time the Negeb was known as Idumea (Edom). It was the homeland of Esau's descendants and the birthplace of Herod the Great, who was an Idumean and not a Jew.

Abraham travels to Gerar.



Abraham Lies To Abimelech.

God appeared to Abimelech in a dream.

He told him he had another man's wife.

**Abimelech pleaded his innocence
because he thought Sarah was unmarried.**

**God told Abimelech He had kept him
from touching Sarah. (20:6;)**

Gen 20:1; “Abraham left there for the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While staying in Gerar,”

Abraham had grown in his faith and in his trust of the Lord, but he still had moments when his trust in the Lord failed.

Question: What **previous mistake** did he repeat while living in Gerar?

What was **the result** of his failure? Gen 12:10-20;

Answer: For the **second time** he claimed that Sarah was sister instead of acknowledging her as his wife. Sarah was taken into the harem of **King Abimelech of Gerar.**

Gen 20:1; “Abraham left there for the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While staying in Gerar,”

Abimelech was the king of Gerar,
a city which was located in the Negeb
between Kadesh-Barnea and the desert of Shur.

The Hebrew word **Abimelek**, which means:-
“**[my] father is king,**” may be a throne-name
passed down to the sons who succeeded their
fathers in **a dynastic line of kings who ruled Gerar.**

Isaac will have a similar encounter
many years later with another man
who is called King Abimelech of Gerar.

Pharaoh and Abimelech.

SIMILARITIES

Encounters a foreign king

Tells “half-truth”
about Sarah

King takes Sarah as wife

God brings plague
upon the king

King is angered
with Abraham

King rewards Abraham

DIFFERENCES

Location of King

Communication
from God

Nature of plague

Timing of reward

Purpose
of reward

Prayer
of Abraham

Gen 20:2; “Abraham said of his wife Sarah, ‘She is my sister,’
and Abimelech the king of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.”

**Like the earlier incident with the Egyptian Pharaoh,
Sarah was selected for harem duty,
a great honour for most women of this era.**

**A woman chosen for a king's harem
could look forward to a life of security and luxury,
and she might be lucky enough to bear the heir.**

**Even at eighty-nine Sarah
was evidently still a beautiful woman.**

Gen 20:1; “But God visited Abimelech in a dream one night. ‘You are to die,’ he told him, ‘because of the woman you have taken, for she is a married woman.’”

Question: How did God intervene to save Sarah and to preserve the legitimacy of the son who was destined to carry the line of the **"promised seed"** and through whom the Abrahamic Covenant was destined to continue?

Answer: God **revealed the truth** of Abraham's relationship with Sarah to Abimelech in a dream and **warned Abimelech** if he failed to return Sarah it would mean death for him and for all those of his household.

Question: What **information** did God offer to Abimelech **as incentive** for right action? **What else did God do** to encourage right action from Abimelech? Gen 20:17-18;

Answer: God told him Abraham was a prophet who could intervene on his behalf.

God caused all of the king's wives to become infertile.

Gen 20:5; “Did he not tell me himself, “She is my sister”? And she herself said, “He is my brother.” ‘I did this with a clear conscience and clean hands.’”

Strange as it may seem, **Abimelech stood head and shoulders above Abraham in this passage.**

We must admit that there is no sin into which **the Christian cannot fall in times of disobedience and unbelief.**

At such times, unbelievers may put the Christian to shame by their integrity and morality. (I Cor 5:1ff;)

While the faithlessness of Abraham comes as no surprise,
The faithfulness of God to Abraham at this time of failure is amazing.

Had I been God, the last thing I would have considered would be to reveal my relationship to Abraham.

Gen 20:5; “Did he not tell me himself, “She is my sister”? And she herself said, “He is my brother.” ‘I did this with a clear conscience and clean hands.’”

Even if my own character demanded that I remain faithful to my promises, **I would not have disclosed to Abimelech that Abraham was a believer,** albeit a carnal one.

Yet God disclosed the fact that **Abraham was the object of His special care.**

More than this, **Abraham was identified as a prophet of God.** (verse 7;)

He was **God’s representative** and the intermediary through whom **Abimelech must be healed.**

Abimelech's Response to God's Warning. 20:8-18;

This must have left Abimelech shaking his head.

**How could Abraham be a man of God
at the same time he was a liar?**

Abimelech, however, was not given any opportunity to take punitive action in spite of the problems

Abraham's disobedience

had brought upon the king's household.

Abraham was the source of Abimelech's suffering,
it was true, but **he was also the solution.**

Abimelech and Abraham both found themselves in a very awkward position.

Abraham Lies To Abimelech.

**Abimelech confronted Abraham
and restored Sarah to him. (20:8-18;)**

**Abraham prayed to God
on behalf of Abimelech and his household.**

**God had closed the wombs
of Abimelech's house because of Sarah.**

Gen 20:1; “Abraham left there for the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While staying in Gerar,”

Abimelech's Response to God's Warning. 20:8-18;

**Question: Was Abimelech an honourable man?
Is there any proof that he was honourable?**

Answer: He answered God honestly,
protesting his innocence.

God was protecting Sarah, but He told the king
that **He was also protecting him from sinning**
by revealing the truth.

because Abimelech's conscience was "clean."

Gen 20:8; “Early next morning, Abimelech summoned his full court and told them the whole story, at which the people were very much afraid,”

9 “Then summoning Abraham, Abimelech said to him, ‘What have you done to us? What wrong have I done to you, for you to bring such guilt on me and my kingdom? You had no right to treat me like this.’

10. Abimelech then said to Abraham, ‘What possessed you to do such a thing?’”

11 “Because’, Abraham replied, ‘I thought there would be no fear of God here and that I should be killed for the sake of my wife. 12 Anyway, she really is my sister, my father's daughter though not my mother's, besides being my wife.’”

13 “So when God made me wander far from my father's home I said to her, “There is an act of love you can do me: everywhere we go, say of me that I am your brother.”

14 “Abimelech took sheep, cattle, men and women slaves, and presented them to Abraham, and gave him back his wife Sarah.”

15 “And Abimelech said, 'Look, my land is open to you. Settle wherever you please.' 16 To Sarah he said, 'Look, I am giving your brother a thousand pieces of silver. This will allay suspicions about you, as far as all the people round you are concerned; you have been completely vindicated.’”

17 “Abraham then interceded with God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave-girls, so that they could have children,.”

18 “for Yahweh had made all the women of Abimelech's household barren on account of Sarah, Abraham's wife.”

Gen 20:13; “So when God made me wander far from my father's home I said to her, "There is an act of love you can do me: everywhere we go, say of me that I am your brother.”

Abimelech's sense of outrage led him to lecture Abraham on his deception and to demand an explanation for his behaviour.

Question: What was Abraham's explanation?

Answer: That he was afraid and that Sarah was his half-sister. It is also interesting that he admitted that he convinced Sarah to comply with his scheme by telling her that **her lie was "an act of love."**

Note two important points here.

First, moral laws existed that all were familiar with (i.e., adultery equals sin).

The moral law is certainly God's laws.
When man violates God's laws he sins.

Gen 20:13; “So when God made me wander far from my father's home I said to her, "There is an act of love you can do me: everywhere we go, say of me that I am your brother.”

Secondly, Note that God is the God of all peoples
(not only the God of Abraham.)

This is the second of the three parallel episodes
in Genesis that concern the peril of a bride
of the Patriarchs Abraham and Isaac.

In each case she is the woman who will bear a child
that will **continue the line of the "promised seed"**
and whose descendants will establish the salvation-kingdom
of Israel, precursor to the salvation-kingdom of the Church:

Episode 1: **Sarah's** abduction by **Pharaoh.** (Gen 12:10-20;)

Episode 2: **Sarah's** abduction by **King Abimelech of Gerar**
(Gen 20:1-18;)

Episode 3: **Rebekah's** thwarted abduction **by King Abimelech**
(Gen 26:1, 7-17;)

Gen 20:13; "So when God made me wander far from my father's home I said to her, "There is an act of love you can do me: everywhere we go, say of me that I am your brother."

Each story has the same 5 elements:-

A migration. (Gen 12:10; 20:1; 26:1;)

An abduction. or threatened abduction.

(Gen 12:15; 20:2; 26:8-10;)

God's intervention. (Gen 12:17; 20:3-7; 26:2-5;)

A deliverance. (Gen 12:19; 20:14; 26:11;)

A conclusion. (Gen 12:20; 20:15-18; 26:12-14;)

These three events point forward to a significant event in salvation history:- the preservation of the "promised seed."

When the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt and God intervened to rescue His Bride, who would one day bring forth the "promised seed" the Redeemer-Messiah.

There is a **link in the narrative**
between God's intervention with **Lot**
and God's intervention with **Abimelech**.

If we compare and contrast
King Abimelech's response to God's intervention
with Lot's response to the angels?

How did the relationship / lack of relationship
with Abraham **impact their lives?**

Gen 12:3; 19:15-16; 17-19, 30; 20:3, 14-18; 21:22-23;

Both men received a divine warning concerning the consequences of sin.

Lot was rescued from danger, but not by his immediate obedience to God's warning (the angels had to forcibly take him out of the city.)

Then, when Lot was told what he must do to be saved, he hesitated to accept the angel's direction and proposed his own plan.

Gen 20:14; “Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen and servants-both men and women-and gave them to Abraham, and he returned his wife, Sarah, to him.”

In contrast, **Abimelech not only listened to God but immediately heeded the warning** and even went beyond **what God told him to do** in seeking divine approval.

Lot is an example of one who **resists complete submission God's will** for one's life. Such **wilful disobedience to turn away from sin can destroy a life.**

Abimelech will be blessed through his **continuing contact with Abraham.**

Lot, in refusing to return to his kinsman Abraham, **lost the blessings** that would have been available to him.

Question: Do we have a **covenant kinsman** through whom His blessings flow out to those of us?

Answer: Yes, **Jesus Christ is our kinsman-Redeemer** and **God pours blessings and grace out** Upon those who are bound by that relationship.

**Genesis
chapter 20;
Abraham & Abimelech**

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**Next in the series:-
Genesis chapter 21; Isaac..**