

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"The God of Abraham"
(Neh. 9:7-8).

Introduction

Today we hear much talk about so-called "gaps." There is the "generation gap" which supposedly exists between the younger and the older generations because they are in conflict with each other instead of communicating with each other. Then there is the "credibility gap." This latter gap is often demonstrated in religion and in politics because the people involved can't be believed because of the inconsistency in the way that they act. In other words, there is often a great gulf fixed between the words of their lips and the works of their lives.

Of even greater concern than the two preceding "gaps" is the "spiritual gap" which exists in the lives of many true Christians. This "spiritual gap" is the gap between knowing what God has promised us in His Word and actually experiencing by faith the reality of these promises in our lives.

Abraham was a man who closed this spiritual gap in his life, or rather kept the gap mighty narrow. God can encourage us through the example of Abraham to close the gap between the promises which we know and the promises of God actually claimed by faith.

Outline and Comments

1. God chose Abraham (v.7a).

Note the mention of God's "glorious name" (Neh. 9:5), and compare Acts 7:2, "The God of glory appeared unto our father, Abraham." Moses desired to see the glory of the God of Abraham and saw it (Ex. 33:18-23; 34: 5-9). Christ revealed God's glory at His first coming (John 1:14) and will do so again at His second coming (Matt. 24:30). This God of Glory is Abraham's God, and He is our God of Glory also through faith in His Son (John 3:16).

2. God brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees (v.7b). Like the rest of his family and the surrounding peoples, Abraham was an idolater (Josh. 24:2-3) until God appeared to him and called him out of idolatry and unto a life of faith (cf. I Thess. 1:0; Heb. 11:8-9). Like Abraham, each believer has been called out of the spiritual darkness of idolatry to be a light to those who yet remain in idolatry and without the true God and saviour, Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13; I Pet. 2:9).

3. God gave him the name of Abraham (v.7c). The original name, Abram, means "high father." But God changed his name to Abraham, "father of a multitude," (Gen. 17:5) before Isaac was ever born and while Ishmael was still a boy. The name Abraham was a promise of God in itself, and Abraham responded to the promise with strong faith (Rom. 4:20). Abraham shows us that to truly trust God, we must like him be "fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). Note this exercise of faith by Paul (Acts 27:25). This kind of unhesitating faith is the only bride that can close the gap between the promises known and the promises claimed.

4. God found a faith heart in Abraham (v.8a). It took great faith for Abraham to leave his home country and kindred (Gen. 12:1), but by faith he obeyed and went to a country that he had never seen (cf. Heb. 11:8). It took greater faith to separate from his close associate and nephew, Lot. In this situation also the obedience and humility of his faith was sufficient (Gen. 13:5-18). It took even greater faith for Abraham to dismiss Hagar and the son to whom he had become closely attached, Ishmael (Gen. 21:9-14). In this more difficult test, Abraham's faith closed the gap in obedience to God's command and promise. It took the greatest faith for Abraham to be willing to offer his son, Isaac (Gen. 22:1-14 cf. Heb. 11:17-19).

Does the Lord find our heart faithful before him?

5. God made a covenant with Abraham to give him the land of Canaan (v. 8b). This eternal, unconditional covenant is described and ratified in Genesis 15:7-21. In God's sight the Jews still have the title deed to the land of Palestine. When the Jewish Nation in the tribulation period turns to the Lord in faith, the "the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" (Obadiah 17) as the Lord restores to them their land in the millennial kingdom (Jer. 23:5-8).

6. God performed what he promised to Abraham and his seed (v.8c). cf. Num. 23:19; Rom. 4:21. God's reputation stands behind His promises, and God's righteousness guarantees that His reputation will never fail, "for thou art righteous."

Challenge to believers

Only God knows how wide your "spiritual gap" is between the promises of God that you know and the promises of God that you actually are claiming by faith. God is well able to perform what He has promised (Rom. 4:21). Let us exercise strong faith and close the "spiritual gap".

Invitation to salvation

Before you can even claim the promises of God, the "sin gap" which separates your sinful soul from a holy God must be bridged. Through His work on the cross Christ has bridged the sin gap, and your soul can be saved and made right with God by believing God's promise of salvation through Christ (Acts 16:31).