

Abraham in the New Testament

Studies to supplement the Sunday preaching on Abraham's life

Study 5

Abraham and Life beyond this Life

At home: Give some thought to the idea that the Son of God has always existed but he was not human until he was born in Bethlehem. Is Jesus still human? Or has he shed his humanity now that he has returned to heaven? Why does it matter?

1. Warm-up Question:

One Old Testament verse that might speak about resurrection is Job 19:26-27. Have a look at that. Can you think of any others that might speak about (or hint at) resurrection?

2. Read **Luke 24:25-27 & 44-46**.

Note: In Jesus's day the Scriptures (our OT) were made up of three divisions (sometimes the first or the first two would stand for all three):

- Moses Gen – Deut
- The Prophets Joshua – Malachi, but excluding:
- The Writings (or 'The Psalms') Books like Psalms, Proverbs, Esther, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles, etc

According to Jesus, does the OT teach resurrection from the dead?

3. Read out **Hebrews 11:17-19**.

We have touched on this verse in previous studies. In the group, talk through Abraham's thought processes.

- a) Why do you think the author uses the word 'reasoned' in v19? (the word in the original is a common word for using logic and reason)
- b) Remember that Abraham knew the Lord well—from meetings and promises the Lord had personally given to him. How has knowing God well expanded Abraham's view of the universe?
- c) Remembering that faith is simply trusting someone you have found to be trustworthy, do you know the Lord well enough to have the same kind of extravagant peace as Abraham had here?

4. Read out **Luke 20:37-38**.

- a) What exactly does Jesus mean here by 'the dead rise' (or 'are raised')? He is not thinking of 'bodily' resurrection, is he?
- b) We usually think of 'living' human beings as those who are living on the earth, like us. How might these words of Jesus help us to shift our thinking about the Biblical God and his relationship with his people?

5. Read out **John 8:56-58**. We will work through these verses in turn.

- a) From v56,
 - Why would Abraham rejoice at the thought of seeing Jesus's 'day'?
 - How can Abraham have already seen Jesus's day? What do you think Jesus has in mind? Is it something specific, or something general?

b) In v57 the Jewish leaders seem only to be able to think of physical, bodily, earthly living. The only way, to them, that Jesus's words could be true would be for Jesus to be thousands of years old and to have met Abraham two thousand years earlier.

- Why do you think their vision was earthbound in this way?
- Being careful not to import non-biblical spiritual ideas, what, in your view, did Jesus think they were missing in vv56-57?

c) In v58 Jesus seems to start an entirely new idea. He is making two distinct claims about himself—one about how old he is, the other about who he is.

- What is he saying about how old he is?
- What is he saying about who he is?

6. We have touched on a lot of things that are difficult to grasp—and the Bible does not pin down for us exactly how to grasp them.

Here are a few points that perhaps we have established:

- Bodily resurrection is promised, even if dimly, in the OT
- Abraham believed in the resurrection of the body
- Abraham is still alive, but not bodily
- Abraham and Jesus have known each other since Abraham's time on earth, and still do
- The Son of God has been around forever

- The Lord maintains a living personal relationship with his people, *through the Son*, even when they have died
- Perhaps we can add that final bodily resurrection after Jesus's return is something distinct from a post-death relationship with Jesus before that final resurrection.

In the group mull over these points. Do you agree on each of them? Discuss any uncertainties you have, or anything else that you would want to include in this list.

7. We will now look at our final passage.

Note here Jesus seems not to be presenting a factual account, but something more akin to a parable. We need to be careful, therefore, not to overinterpret this text. Also, there is much more to this passage than we are going to explore here.

Read out **Luke 16:19-31**.

- a) Why do you think it is Abraham who is pictured here, rather than, eg, Noah, or Moses, or David?
- b) Despite all we have seen this evening about being alive after death, Abraham does not want to develop Lazarus's brothers interest in these matters (v31b). What does he want for them instead (v29)?
- c) How does this help us to avoid speculation, and stick to what Abraham stuck to (while he was on the earth!)?

8. Give thanks for the brilliant and tantalizing promises of life and resurrection. And pray for those you know who might be in the position of Lazarus's brothers.