

Genesis 13:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Analysis

Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

אֶל מִקְדָּם אֲשֶׁר בְּמִזְבֵּחַ שֶׁה שְׁמַע שׁ

H413 **Unto the place** of the altar H834 **which he had made** H8033

H4725 H4196 H6213

וְאֵלֶּה בְּשֶׁמֶן אֶבְרָהָם בְּרָאשָׁנָה הָיָה:

there at the first called and there Abram on the name of the LORD H3068

H7223 H7121 H8033 H87 H8034 H3068

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 29:12 (Parallel theme): Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

Isaiah 58:9 (References Lord): Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

Psalms 116:2 (Parallel theme): Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

Zephaniah 3:9 (References Lord): For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

Psalms 107:1 (References Lord): O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 145:18 (References Lord): The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

Psalms 107:15 (References Lord): Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

Psalms 84:10 (Parallel theme): For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Psalms 116:17 (Sacrifice): I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

1 Corinthians 1:2 (References Lord): Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's: