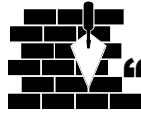


## ESAU - "The Quiet Assassin Of Godlessness"



### “Building Blocks”

1. **(Q1)** There is no indication that Abraham’s two encounters with “the angel of the LORD” in this narrative were private. Isaac seems to have seen and heard the same things his father did:

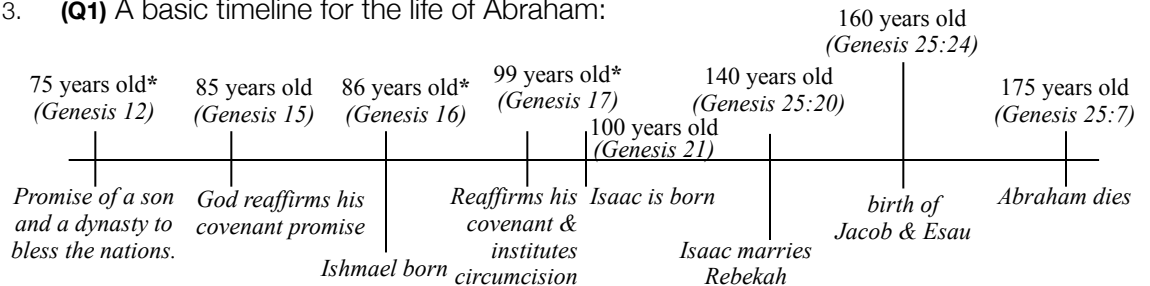
*“Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”* **Genesis 22:10-12, ESV.**

*“And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.””* **Genesis 22:15-18, ESV.**

This means that Isaac had an encounter with God as a child that was as real and personal and his father’s three previous encounters (cf. Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1).

2. **(Q1)** The “angel of the LORD” is a mysterious figure in the Old Testament. He is very different from other angelic beings in regards to his association with Yahweh. Because of the number of times he is actually identified *with* Yahweh, many scholars believe the “angel of the LORD” is none other than the Eternal Son of God prior to the incarnation. This is called a “theophany.” (cf. Gen 16:7-13; Jdgs 6:12-14; 13:21,22).

3. **(Q1)** A basic timeline for the life of Abraham:



4. **(Q5)** The Greek word translated “godless” (NAS, NIV), “unholy” (ESV), is *bebēlos*. It is a combination of two words meaning “to step on the threshold.” The broad meaning here is to be vulgar or common. It means to treat God like we would any other person.
5. **(Q5, Ezekiel)** The real focus of this indictment of God’s people during the Babylonian captivity is their perspective on “church/worship as entertainment.” They were inviting people to “come hear this guy!” instead of going to meet with God. This is a “concert” mentality; spectator worship, the type one either “enjoys” or doesn’t “enjoy.” Our modern obsession with preaching personalities reflected in the phrase, “I didn’t get much out of the service today.” is a reflection of this 6<sup>th</sup> century BC attitude.

6. **(Q5, Matt 23)** Jesus' description here is of what the Bible calls a "hypocrite." This NT word comes from the theater of the first century, and literally meant "*to speak from beneath a mask.*"
7. **(Q5, 2 Tim 3)** The Greek word translated "*appearance*" (ESV) or "*form*" (NAS) is only used twice in our New Testaments, both by Paul. The other is in Romans 2:20 where he says, "*the Law is the embodiment of knowledge and truth.*" In both cases, he is speaking of people who "appear" to be one thing and are, in fact, quite the opposite.
8. **(Q7)** This idea of "godless speech" is crucial to this chapter of *To Stand*. "Godless talk" is conversation that excludes God from places where He belongs. If we leave God out of our conversation with others, especially in areas where He genuinely belongs (e.g. when I am wronged, when I am suffering, when I am angry, when other believers have wronged me, etc.), it will be a short while before I am leaving him out of my thoughts altogether. Then, my choices will be driven by my own desires. "Godless" speech will give birth to ungodly living.



## "Stumbling Stones"

1. **(Q1)** The Genesis account of Abraham, because of literary liberties taken by Moses, is *not* always linear. In fact, Abraham would have lived long enough to possibly have met his *grandsons Esau and Jacob*, not to mention major events in Isaac and Ishmael's lives. The Genesis narratives often give summaries that are followed by "flashback" accounts of things that preceded them. In the case of Esau and Jacob, the arrangement of the material appears to teach that Abraham died before they were born. But, this was *not* the case:
  - a. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 (Gen 21:5).
  - b. Isaac married Rebekah when Abraham was 140 (Gen 25:20).
  - c. Esau and Jacob were born when Abraham was 160 (Gen 25:26).
  - d. Abraham died at age 175 (Gen 25:7).
2. **(Q5)** The verses for this question do *not* have the word for "godless" in them. They were chosen to "describe or illustrate" godlessness.
3. **(Q5, 2 Tim 3)** Don't be misled or side-tracked by the sordid list of adjectives in this long litany of "last days" behaviors. The key one here to focus on is the final one: "*having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.*" This is talking about what we could truly call, "godless godliness"; a pious exterior that has rejected God as Lord of one's life. This is as true as a minivan-driving mom in a carpool as it is a drug dealer. The issue is *not* the heinousness of sinful behavior, but relegating God to the category of a "non issue."



## “Going Deeper”

1. **(Q4, Gen 25)** Have group members share their responses to this question. The main ideas you are looking for should touch on:
  - a. The perceived *insignificance* of the birthright compared to Esau’s hunger.
  - b. The value placed on the present over the future.
  - c. The disregard of what *God* wanted for Esau in the face of what he wanted for himself.
  - d. The disregard of God’s larger purposes of human history (i.e. *others*) in the face of his personal plans.
2. **(Q5, Luke 12)** What relationship do you think there is between godlessness and leisure? (NOTE: This is *not* seeking to equate the two, only open up a discussion between connections between the two.)
3. **(Q7)** What do you think “godless talk” actually is?
4. **(Q8)** Would you say this is such a thing as “godless godliness”? If so, describe it.
5. **(Q9)** Have group members share responses to both phases of this question.