

Forever Focus

Bible Glossary: People & Places

Sheikh Rashid

Sermon Reference

Mentioned as a visionary leader of Dubai who inspired the city's transformation by focusing on the future, investing oil revenues into urban developments, deepening Dubai Creek, and establishing the international airport.

Background Context

Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum was the ruler of Dubai from 1958 until his death in 1990. His tenure was marked by a strategic vision that transformed Dubai from a modest coastal settlement primarily dependent on pearl diving to a global commercial hub. Early in his reign, the economy faced challenges; the pearl industry had declined, and the port was inadequate for rising international shipping demands. Understanding the necessity of economic diversification, Sheikh Rashid embarked on bold infrastructural projects to modernize the city.

In 1959, on a global tour, Sheikh Rashid observed the importance of diversified economies and robust transport systems in burgeoning cities. Acting on these insights, he deepened Dubai Creek—the city's original natural harbor—to accommodate larger ships and established Dubai International Airport, significantly increasing the city's accessibility. These constructs were financed through borrowed funds, risking financial insolvency until the discovery of modest oil reserves in the mid-1960s alleviated fiscal pressures.

Instead of viewing oil wealth as an immediate source of limitless prosperity, Sheikh Rashid reinvested these resources into urban and infrastructural development, setting a foundation for sustainable growth. He expanded highways and initiated plans for public transit systems such as the commuter tram, showcasing an early commitment to thoughtful urban planning.

Abraham

Sermon Reference

Abraham is cited as an example of a pilgrim and stranger on earth, who lived by faith looking forward to an eternal city built by God, as described in Hebrews 11.

Importance in the Bible

Abraham's role is foundational in the biblical narrative as the initiator of God's covenant with humanity through whom the Messiah would come. His life illustrates the critical theological concept of faith—trust in God's promises beyond present circumstances—a theme that shapes Christian theology profoundly. The sermon uses Abraham as a paradigm for living as pilgrims and strangers, emphasizing to believers that their citizenship is ultimately in heaven, not in this transient world. This frames the Christian life as one of hope and forward-looking faith, anchored in the promises of God.

Background Context

Abraham, originally Abram, is one of the foundational figures of faith in the Bible, revered as the father of the Israelite nation and a model of steadfast belief in God's promises. His narrative begins in the Book of Genesis, where God calls him to leave his country and kindred to go to a land He would show him. Abraham's journey was marked by obedience amidst uncertainty and a deep trust that God's promises would be fulfilled.

He is pivotal in the biblical storyline as the recipient of the covenant from God—promising him that he would father a great nation, and through him, all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3). This covenant established a lineage that culminates in the coming of Jesus Christ, making Abraham central not only to Judaism but also to Christianity and Islam. His faith journey is chronicled typically as a paradigm of faith and righteousness, especially notable when he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to God's command.

In Hebrews 11, often called the 'Faith Hall of Fame,' Abraham's faith is highlighted as exemplary. He lived 'like a stranger in a foreign land,' committed to a heavenly city not built by human hands. His faith looked beyond the temporal to the eternal, trusting God's promises despite not seeing their immediate fulfillment. This perspective shaped his identity as a pilgrim, not fully at home in the world but headed towards a definitive, lasting home in God's kingdom.

Moses

Sermon Reference

Referenced as an example of faith by seeing the invisible, leaving Egypt and persevering because he trusted in God's unseen realities during his leadership of Israel's deliverance.

Importance in the Bible

Moses is foundational as the lawgiver and deliverer, central to God's covenant relationship with Israel. His example of seeing the invisible and persevering by faith

models the believer's call to trust God beyond what is immediately tangible. In Christian theology, Moses prefigures Christ as a mediator and deliverer, and his faith journey forms a key segment of the 'faith hall of fame' that inspires believers to keep their eyes on eternal realities. The sermon draws on his example to encourage believers to maintain an eternal perspective and see beyond the immediate challenges of life.

Background Context

Moses is arguably one of the most pivotal figures in the Old Testament, serving as the leader through whom God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. His life story begins with a remarkable providential preservation, being set afloat on the Nile River to escape Pharaoh's decree to kill Hebrew male infants. Raised in Pharaoh's household, Moses later fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian overseer and experienced God's calling through the burning bush, commissioning him to lead God's people out of slavery.

His mission included the confrontation with Pharaoh, the performance of divine signs and wonders, and the ultimate liberation of the Israelites—a foundational event for Israel's identity as God's chosen people. Moses then becomes the mediator of God's covenant, delivering the Ten Commandments and establishing the theocratic order through the Law at Mount Sinai. The narratives of Exodus through Deuteronomy chronicle his leadership and the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

Moses' faith is characterized by courageous obedience in the face of daunting challenges, anchored in his assurance of God's invisible presence and power. Hebrews 11:27 emphasizes his faith 'by faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.' This encapsulates Moses' reliance on the unseen reality of God's promises over visible circumstances, which was essential for navigating wilderness wanderings and leading a reluctant people toward the Promised Land.

Barnabas

Sermon Reference

Mentioned by Henry Madava as a biblical figure who sold property and gave the proceeds to the church; his faithfulness with money is linked to spiritual success.

Importance in the Bible

Barnabas embodies the biblical principle that material faithfulness supports and advances the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church. His example in selling property and dedicating resources after the resurrection church's communal life provides a powerful testimony that generosity. The sermon uses Barnabas's example to instruct believers on the integration of financial stewardship with spiritual maturity, underscoring the biblical relationship between faithful giving and divine blessing.

Background Context

Barnabas emerges in the New Testament as a prominent early Christian leader and encourager. His given name was Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas, meaning 'son of encouragement' or 'son of consolation.' He first appears in Acts 4, where he sells

a field and donates the proceeds to the apostles, exemplifying sacrificial giving and commitment to the community. This act sets a precedent for generosity and unity in the early church.

He played a crucial role in supporting the apostle Paul's early ministry, introducing him to the other apostles in Jerusalem when Paul's past as a persecutor of Christians made others hesitant. Barnabas is also known for his missionary journeys alongside Paul, particularly the first missionary journey chronicled in Acts 13-14, where they spread the gospel among Gentiles, establishing churches in key cities.

Barnabas's ministry highlights themes of generosity, reconciliation, and leadership giftedness in the Spirit-empowered early church. His willingness to sacrifice materially and invest generously in the community represents a tangible expression of faith. The connection between financial stewardship and spiritual authority, made in the sermon, draws from his example whereby faithfulness in tangible gifts opened doors for greater spiritual impact and ministry responsibility.

Abel

Sermon Reference

Referenced in a discussion on the human tendency towards materialism and envy, contrasting Abel's acceptance of God's favor with Cain's jealousy.

Importance in the Bible

Abel's role, though brief in the biblical text, is vital for setting early paradigms of faith and righteousness. His offering and acceptance by God articulate key biblical truths about worship and discipleship, highlighting that God values the heart and faith behind actions. Abel's narrative warns against envy and sin, reflecting the ongoing spiritual warfare evident throughout Scripture. The sermon references Abel to illustrate the dangers of materialism and misplaced desire, reminding believers to seek meaning beyond possessions.

Background Context

Abel is one of the earliest figures introduced in the Bible, appearing in Genesis 4 as the second son of Adam and Eve. He was a shepherd by occupation, and the biblical narrative highlights his offering to God as accepted because it was given in faith and with the right heart. In contrast, Cain, his older brother and a farmer, offered a sacrifice that was not accepted by God, leading to jealousy that culminated in Cain murdering Abel.

The story of Cain and Abel is foundational to understanding themes of sin, worship, and human relational dynamics in the biblical text. Abel's faith and righteousness stand in stark opposition to Cain's actions, thereby illustrating early biblical principles about the nature of true worship and the consequences of sin. Abel is not only acknowledged for his offering but also for being 'righteous' as referenced in Hebrews 11:4, which commends his faith.

Though his life was tragically cut short, Abel's legacy serves as a prototype of faith-driven obedience and a life pleasing to God. His story sets the tone for later biblical discussions about faith, sacrifice, and the conflict between good and evil within human relationships and society. Abel's life encourages believers to worship God with sincerity and to be mindful of envy and sin's destructive consequences.

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