

Genesis 12 – The Call of Abram

I. The Command and Promise to Abram (1-3)

A. Abram is Called To Leave (1)

1. Terah, Abram's father left Ur of the Chaldees and settled in Haran
2. God Calls Abram:
 - a. To Leave His country
 - b. To Leave His Clan (kindred)
 - c. To Leave His Father's House
 - i. Abram is called not just to leave geographically, but to separate himself from all that he has known
 - ii. Abram is called to leave the security and prosperity of his familiar setting for the unknown
 - iii. Heb. 11:8 - *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*
 - d. To Leave For an Unknown Land
 - i. Abram was not told where the Lord was leading him
 - ii. Abram is simply told to leave without knowing where he was going.

B. Abram is Promised God's Blessing (2-3)

1. God Does Not Simply "Bless" Abram as He did previously with Adam and Noah – Here God Himself Will Fulfill the Blessing
 - a. This will be the major theme from here throughout Genesis
 - b. God will provide for His promise despite obstacles and the sin of His people
 - c. The formal covenant with Abram will be established in Ch. 15 – but God here pronounces the promises of that covenant.
2. God Gives Abram Two Commands With Three Promises Attached to Each
 - a. Command (from v. 1) – Get Yourself Out:
 - i. Promise 1 – God will make him a great nation
 - The only way this could be possible is if Abram has a son and Sarai is barren
 - God will begin with Abram and Father a nation for Himself
 - ii. Promise 2 - God will bless him
 - This "blessing" isn't exactly explained, but we can assume from the rest of Abram's life that prosperity is partly involved

- This “blessing” probably is mainly concerned with Abram’s covenant relationship with God. God intended to “bless” all mankind, but sin has cursed it.
- iii. Promise 3 - God will make his name great
 - This is what the rebels at the tower of Babel had desired
 - God Himself will make Abram’s name great by making him the father of many nations (a promise God will give in a later chapter)
- b. Command – You will Be a Blessing (This is an imperative in Hebrew) – God’s blessing comes with the responsibility to bless others.
 - i. Promise 1 - God will bless those who bless Abram
 - God has not abandoned humanity
 - God will now bring His blessing through Abram the mediator (and his seed)
 - Example: God blesses Laban’s house simply because Jacob is there (Gen. 30)
 - Example: God blesses Potiphar’s house simply because Joseph is there (Gen. 39:5)
 - ii. Promise 2 - God will curse those who curse Abram
 - This is seen throughout Genesis as well
 - God will strike the Egyptians in Egypt for their treatment of Israel
 - God will strike Pharaoh in this chapter for taking Abram’s wife.
 - Jesus teaches this same truth in Matt. 25 – “When you have done this to the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me”
 - iii. Promise 3 - God will bless the earth through Abram
 - This is the foretelling of the gospel message
 - Galatians 3:8-9 - *And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

- Galatians 3:14 - *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*
- Galatians 3:29 - *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
- NOTE: Be very careful about applying the promise to Abraham to any physical nation (regardless of what they are called) if they deny the gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. The Faithful Obedience of Abram (4-5)

A. Abram Departs at Age 75 (4)

1. By denoting his age, we see the reality of Abram's faith
 - a. Abram is already an old man
 - b. Abram will only live 175 years total
 - c. Abram obeys and leaves all he knows for something that is completely unknown to him
 - i. This will also be important because Abram will have no son until over 20 years later
2. Abram puts God's call before that of his family loyalty and the security of his tribe's structure

B. Abram Takes His Wife and Possessions

1. Sarai and Lot accompany Abram to the land of Canaan
2. They also take their possessions, servants they acquired in Haran and went out toward Canaan

III. The Promise Confirmed To Abram (6-7a)

A. Abram Arrives At Shechem

1. Shechem will be an important city as the history of Israel unfolds
2. The plain (or oak) of Moreh is a disputed place
 - a. The word Moreh means "teacher"
 - b. The "teacher's" plain (or oak) may mean that pagan oracles were given here
 - c. Abram finds himself in a land filled with pagans

B. The Canaanites Dwelled in the land

1. The first obstacle of Abram's faith appears – God never said that these cursed people would dwell in the land
2. Perhaps Abram thought he was going to an uninhabited land
3. Imagine what Abram thought as he came into Canaan – "This is not going to be easy"

C. God Re-affirms His Promise to Abram

1. God reassures Abram that His promise is still real and powerful
2. Now The Lord actually Appears to Abram

- a. God reassures Abram that He will Indeed Give this land to Abram's Seed
- b. This also assures Abram that He will indeed have a seed of his very own (despite Sarai's barrenness)
- c. Despite the obvious obstacles that exist, God is faithful and powerful to fulfill His promise

IV. The Faithful Worship of Abram (7b-9)

A. Abram Builds an Altar at Shechem (7b)

- 1. Abram responds to God's promise by building an altar at Shechem
 - a. This was specifically an act of worship (it is possible that he sacrificed to God there, but it is not said)
 - b. This also staked Abram's claim that the land indeed belonged to Yahweh – He builds the altar to God in the middle of pagan territory
- 2. Abram (and his descendents) will continue the practice of building altars to the Lord

B. Abram Builds an Altar at Bethel (8)

- 1. Abram again moves from Shechem toward Bethel continuing his journey south through the land of Canaan
- 2. Here He builds another altar and "calls upon the name of the Lord"
 - a. This certainly means he worships God
 - b. Some commentators maintain that Abram also proclaimed the name of the Lord to the inhabitants of the land

C. Abram Continues Toward the Negev (9)

- 1. The Negev is the dry land at the southern edge of the land of Canaan
- 2. Abram is pictured as sojourning through the land of promise, building altars and worshipping God

D. Faithful obedience to the promises of God involves obedience and worship – both are characterized by Abram (although we will see in the next chapter that Abram is not sinless)