



A Study of the Book of GENESIS



Joe M. Easterling - Minister of Discipleship

WEEK SEVEN

The Call and Covenant of Abraham (Genesis 12-17)

- **Joshua 24:2-3** – ²And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. ³Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

Abram was 75 years old, with another century left to live. He had already had a blessed life: a successful business, a remarkably beautiful wife, affectionate and loyal servants, and a pedigree that could be traced through the blessed line of Shem all the way back to Adam.¹

Genesis 11:27-32 – Abram was the son of Terah, a descendant of Shem. He was a native of Ur, located near the northwest edge of the Persian Gulf. Eventually, Abram left Ur, along with his father, Terah, his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot (and perhaps others; see Gen. 24 & 29); and traveled to Haran, about 300 miles northeast of Canaan (eastern Turkey). It is in Haran where Abram’s father dies and from where Abram answers God’s call to be the father of many nations.

Genesis 12:1-9 – Call of Abram

- **Acts 7:2-8** – ²And he said, “Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, ³and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ ⁴Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. ⁵And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. ⁶But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years. ⁷‘And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.’ ⁸Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

Important information about Abram's story can be seen in Stephen's synopsis. First, verses 2-4 give key facts about the call of Abram:

- God called Abram to leave his country and family while he was in _____.
- Abram left his country, but not his _____. He had his father and nephew accompany him.
- Abram did not go to the land of Canaan but stopped at the land of _____. Only after his father's death did God move Abram into the land of Canaan.

God's call to Abram was mixed with requirements and promises.

- **God's Requirements to Abram**

- Abram was to leave his _____.
- Abram was to leave his _____ and his _____ house.
- Abram was to go to a _____ determined by the Lord.

- **God's Promises to Abram**

- God will make Abram a _____.
- God will _____ Abram.
- God will make Abram's _____ great.
- God will make Abram a _____. (This is grammatically an imperative, meaning Abram is instructed to be a blessing. Thus his call was, from the outset, a missional mandate encompassing all people.
- God will _____ and _____ those who do the _____ to Abram.
- God will make Abram a _____ of blessing to all the _____ of the earth.

Genesis 12:4-9 tells that Abram answers God's call. When Abram left Haran, he was ___ years old, and his wife Sarai was _____. Having lost his own father, Haran, and grandfather, Terah, Abram's nephew, _____, decides to accompany them. Abram was apparently a fairly prosperous rancher or businessman at this time because he had considerable wealth and a number of servants, all of whom he took to Canaan.

This was a long journey, approximately 300 miles. As he entered Canaan, he stopped for a time in Shechem, near the center of the land. It is here that, for the first time mentioned in the Bible, God "_____ _____" (the first theophany found in the Scripture). Here, God added to His promise to Abram that to his descendants (literally, "seed") God would give this land (v. 7), though at the time, Abram owned none of it.

In response, Abram built an altar to the Lord.ⁱⁱ Despite the obstacle of the Canaanites already occupying the land (v. 6), Abram believed God's promise and built an altar to proclaim his God (vs. 8) as a true descendant of Seth and Noah.ⁱⁱⁱ Abram continued traveling until he reached _____, about 35 miles south of Shechem. Here he built another altar, calling on the name of the Lord. Then he continued on further south, toward the Negev, thus traveling the entire length of the land of Canaan.

- **Hebrews 11:8-10** – ⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Genesis 12:10-20 – Abram in Egypt

Suddenly, a severe trial of Abram's faith takes place in the form of a famine. It looked as though the land that God had promised could not sustain Abram and his family. Yet God's promise had not changed, and Abram needed to trust God not only in times of abundance but also in times of great need. A whole series of events now follow Abram's decision, each one stemming from and showing Abram's lack of trust in God.

- Abram abandons _____, the land of God's promise, and enters _____, the land of the world.

- Abram abandons his _____ in order to preserve his _____.

As far as Abram's claim that Sarai was his "sister," this was a half-truth since she was his half-sister (Genesis 20:12). The logic behind Abram's decision was that if an individual in power wanted to take a woman into his harem, he is likely inclined to negotiate with her brother, but he is more likely to eliminate the husband simply.^{iv}

This wife/sister theme appears three times in Genesis and it has at least three purposes:

- 1) It serves as a _____ strategy by migrants against local authorities.
- 2) It presents a contest between the _____ and the _____
_____ of powerful civilizations (even the god-king Pharaoh).
- 3) It is designed to heighten _____ in the story when the promise of an heir to the covenant is _____.

Genesis 13 – Abram Inherits Canaan

Genesis 13 tells explains that Abram returned to _____, near the place near the place the Lord first appeared to him. The story is a subtle indication of Abram’s repentance from using his own wits to _____ in God to fulfill His promises. It is this trust in God that leads him to the decision to separate from _____.

- **Genesis 13:7-13** –As the eldest and leader of the clan, Abram had every right to choose the land for his family and possessions. Instead, he graciously offered priority to Lot, who seized the opportunity to his own advantage (or so he thought). Bethel is located about ___ miles east of the Jordan River and is on the _____ mountain ridge in the middle of Canaan. Unlike its reputation of being inhospitable today, the plains around the Dead Sea the Jordan Valley provide ample land for grazing.^v Lot looked over this land and saw that it was similar to the lush land of _____ and what he imagined the Garden of _____ would have been like (v. 10).^{vi} More recently, Lot had seen the land along the Nile in Egypt. But the land possessed a people who already had a _____ reputation. Moreover, the Jordan River is consistently identified as the eastern border of Canaan, meaning the land Lot was overlooking was _____ of the territory which God had promised. Despite all this, Lot decided that was the land that he wanted.
- **Genesis 13:14-18** – On the other hand, Abram was learning that God would take care of his needs no matter where he was. As a result, Abram finally fulfilled God’s command to separate from his _____ (12:1) and live in the land God had promised. In response, God again confirmed his promise to Abram to give him the land. As far as Abram could see in any direction, God told him that the land would forever _____ to him and his _____. God even told Abram to _____ through the length and breadth of the land as a conqueror claiming his territory, in faith taking possession of what God had promised.

Genesis 15 – God’s Covenant with Abram

The Abrahamic Covenant is really the beginning of the formal revelation of the covenant of grace, of God's decision to reach into humanity and specifically save people for Himself. It comes in the form of a promise to Abram. Abram was the son of an idol worshiper who did not know God. Yet God takes the initiative, calls him into a relationship with Himself, and unilaterally makes some promises to Abraham.

➤ **Genesis 15:6** – “And he **believed** in the LORD, and He **accounted** it to him for righteousness.” (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23)

➤ *Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23*

- **Genesis 15:1-21 (see also 12:1-7; 17:1-14)**

As we discussed God’s covenant with Noah, covenants recorded in the Bible generally have five components. These components are also seen in God’s covenant with Abram.

- The **parties responsible** for the covenant.

- *Gen. 17:2, 4, 7*

- The **beneficiaries** of the covenant.

- *Gen. 17:2, 4, 7*

- The **terms** and **conditions** of the covenant.

- ❖ *God’s responsibilities:*

- 1) The promise of _____ (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21).

- 2) The promise of _____ (Genesis 13:16; 15:5; 22:17-18).

- 3) The promise of _____ and _____ to all people through Abraham’s people (Genesis 12:2-3; 17:6, 16).

- The **duration** of the covenant.

- *Gen. 17:7*

- The **sign** of the covenant.

- *Genesis 15:8-17* – This covenant ceremony has several key elements to note:

- Abram’s “_____” is the same word used to describe the state of Adam when God took a part of his side to make Eve (Gen. 2:21). The significance of Abram’s sleep is that he did _____ participate in the covenant ceremony. The _____ of the covenant was on _____ and His promises (Gen. 15:18; Jeremiah 34:18-20).^{vii}
 - The _____ demonstrate that this covenant was ratified with _____. Passing through this sacrificial pathway was seen as a symbolic act of enacting a curse on the one who violates this promise.^{viii}
 - The image of the “_____” was comparable to Yahweh’s revelation to Israel as the pillar of fire and cloud (Exodus 13:21).^{ix}
- *Genesis 17:1-16* – Similarly, this covenant leaves a couple of lasting signs on Abram, his wife, and his promised descendants:
- The _____ of Abram and Sarai. Abram (“exalted father”) is now called **Abraham** (“_____ of a _____”). The rest of Genesis shows how this sign was realized when Abraham’s descendants became the originators of whole nations. Similarly, Sarai (to “persist,” “exert oneself,” “persevere”) becomes **Sarah** (“_____”). No longer will she be a mere contender in her home (as with Hagar), but the recipient of the Divine promise.^x
 - _____ is now commanded for all male descendants of Abraham, and it served several purposes:
 - It _____ the seed of Abraham from the Gentiles.
 - It _____ Israel of their covenant with God (shedding of _____).
 - It _____ the purification from sin and putting away of evil (Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:26; Colossians 2:11-12).^{xi}

In the Abrahamic Covenant, the Lord repeated the covenant promise to three generations. All three were promised land, many descendants, and a blessing from the Lord.

_____ was called out of Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan, and the Lord established a covenant with Him (Genesis 12:1-3). The Lord reaffirmed the same covenant He made with Abraham’s son, _____ (Genesis 21:12; 26:3-4). Later, the covenant was affirmed with Isaac’s son, _____ (Genesis 28:14-15).

Why is this important?

Throughout the Old Testament and into the New, God is often called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—a reminder that He is the God of the _____.

- **Exodus 3:14-15** – ¹⁴And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’”
- **Acts 3:12-13** – ¹²So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.”

ⁱ John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 114..

ⁱⁱ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific & Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976), 295-296.

ⁱⁱⁱ W. A. Criswell, *The Believer’s Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 24-25.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid., 45.

^{vi} Morris, *Genesis Record*, 303.

^{vii} Criswell, *The Believer’s Study Bible*, 28.

^{viii} Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *Bible Background Commentary: OT*, 48.

^{ix} Criswell, *The Believer’s Study Bible*, 29.

^x Ibid., 31.

^{xi} Ibid.