

# Genesis – Lesson 11

## Abram's Travels

### Read Genesis 12:1-9

1. (a) Recount the seven *specific* promises God made to Abram in vv. 2-3. How did God *fulfill* them?

God made the following seven promises to Abram: 1) that God would make of Abram a *great nation*, 2) that God would *bless* Abram, 3) that God would make Abram's *name* great, 4) that Abram would be a blessing to others, 5) that God would bless those who blessed Abram, 6) that God would curse those who cursed Abram, and 7) that all of the families of the earth would be blessed in him. Each of these are fulfilled *specifically*: 1) the people of Israel would eventually come from the lineage of Abram, 2) Abram would be blessed by God with much material wealth, 3) the name of Abram would be known for the rest of time, 4) Abram would be a blessing to others in their situations (e.g. Lot), 5) people who honored Abram would be blessed (e.g. Melchizedek) 6) those who came against Abram would be cursed (e.g. Pharaoh), and 7) all of the families (or nations) on the earth would find God's blessing through the specific ways God worked through Abram (i.e. the Messiah).

- (b) What *additional* promise did God make to Abram once he arrived in Canaan (see v. 7)?

God promised Abram that he would give him the land of Canaan, even though it was already occupied by the Canaanites.

- (c) How does the prophecy of Zechariah 10:6-10 and Paul's assertion in Romans 11:25-29 fit with God's *final* promise to Abram? *When* will this promise be fulfilled?

The prophecy of Zechariah 10 speaks of a time when God will "*whistle*" for the people of Israel to return from being scattered throughout the world. This prophecy was written *after* the exile of the Southern Kingdom (during the days of Ezra), and it foreshadows a time when God will call for his people to be gathered again and return to the land that God had promised to Abram. Paul asserts in Romans 11 that there will be a day when all of Israel will be recalled to the land to receive the *final* inheritance promised to Abram, and that this will be after the days of the Gentiles have closed. Both of these together indicate that God will, at the consummation of Christ's kingdom when he returns, gather the people of Israel to take *permanent* possession of the land promised to them through Abram.

2. (a) How *old* was Abram when he left Haran? Compared to his *final age* (see Genesis 25:7-8), was he young, middle-aged, or old? Why is this *important*?

Abram was 75 when he left Haran, and was 175 when he died. This would mean that (statistically), Abram was *young*; he was only about 43% of the way through his life (43% of the life of a man living to his normal life expectancy of 76 is 33). Abram had most of his life still ahead of him when he left for Canaan, abandoning all of the *potential* that he had in his former life in order to obey God. As a young man, he did not see the pursuit of the things of his time to be *more* important than obedience to God's call; to abandon *everything* to follow God (see 2b below) *at his age* is a significant clue to his willingness to do what God required.

- (b) How do we know that Abram put *everything* into obeying God's call?

Verse 5 tells us that Abram took *everything that he possessed* and set out for Canaan. Obviously, there was no turning back; by taking everything, Abram intended to settle in a new place.

(c) According to Hebrews 11:8-10, *why* did Abram obey God? What promise do we have when we obey in this way (see Romans 10:11)?

According to the author of Hebrews, Abram was *“looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”* Although he was going to a foreign land, to live in tents with his children and grandchildren (i.e. as a wanderer), he was anticipating the day when God would establish him and his offspring in a place that was *permanent* and *designed by God*. He went there *expecting* God to provide him with security and protection. We have the same promise: when we trust in Christ by faith, we *“will not be put to shame,”* meaning that we, too, are looking forward to God keeping his promise and providing us with security and protection. Like Abram, we strike out in faith on the basis of what God has promised, and we *“look forward”* with anticipation to the day when God will *vindicate* our faith before him. Along the way, we trust that God will provide for us and *keep us* from falling away (i.e. being put to shame).

3. What does Abram do as a *response* to God's promises when he arrives (see v. 7)? How is this *similar* to Noah's response to God in Genesis 9:20-22?

When he arrives, he builds an altar to the Lord and (by implication), offers to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving upon it. Just as Noah offered to God a sacrifice of gratitude for carrying him and his family through the flood, Abram offers to God a sacrifice of gratitude once he safely arrives in Canaan and God promises him the land. Interestingly, this is *in spite* of the fact that Abram has *no knowledge* of this God and his ways; Abram offers a sacrifice as a *normal* response to the Creator in recognizing what God has done for him and will do for him in the future.

### Read Genesis 12:10-13:1

4. (a) From Genesis 20:12, what *additional* fact do we learn about Sarai? How is this *relevant* here?

We learn that Sarai was (in fact) Abram's sister, the daughter of his father by a different mother. In the story of Abram entering into Egypt and suggesting to Sarai that she tell others that she is his sister (to protect him), this is *in fact* truthful.

- (b) What was Abram's *fear* as he entered Egypt? What was his *sin*? How did his sin affect *others*?

Abram was afraid for his own life, fearing that someone in Egypt may kill him in order to take his beautiful wife from him. So, Abram tells Sarai to only tell others that she is his sister. His sin was in 1) being untruthful before others and 2) failing to trust in God to protect him and his wife. His sin impacted Pharaoh, for God struck the Pharaoh with great plagues until he released Sarai back to Abram; if Abram (and Sarai) had told the truth, Pharaoh would have left her alone because God would have protected them both from harm.

- (c) Did Abram follow *common sense* or did he seek God's guidance? Did he *go back* on his faith?

There is no indication in this event that Abram sought guidance from God, but, instead, trusted in his own common sense and intelligence to figure out how to protect himself. However, it would not be a true statement to say that Abram *“went back”* on his faith. He continued to trust in God *in a general sense*, but was caught up in a sinful act, as all who trust in Christ do. It is *not* an abandonment of faith to sin, but a *genuine* faith never seeks to sin nor fails to repent when called upon to do so.

5. (a) How did Pharaoh *know* that the plagues were from God (see v. 17)? What does this tell you about God's *sovereignty* over every situation?

When the plagues arrive, the Pharaoh calls for Abram and questions him as to why he did not reveal that Sarai was his wife. The *obvious* implication is that God revealed this to him in some unique way. After all, Sarai and Abram were *hiding* this information; the *only* way that Pharaoh could have figured it out was by someone telling him, and this had to be from God himself. What this tells us is that God is in control of *every* situation, and he uses whatever *means* that he wishes to accomplish his purposes. This implies, unfortunately, that there may be times when God must use *difficult circumstances* to accomplish his goals in our lives.

(b) What lesson is there for *us* in God forcing Abram back to the Negev?

**God had purposed for Abram to live in the land of Canaan, not in Egypt. Regardless of the circumstances, God had purposed Abram to live in that place and that God would provide for him while there. The same is true for followers of Jesus: God *purposes* us to live in radical obedience to Jesus Christ; any time that we stray from that place, God will (in his own way) force us back to where he wants us to be. This may mean (as seen above) that God may bring difficult trials to us in order to discipline us *back* to a place of obedience, and we would do well to stay put and enjoy the blessings of God rather than wander off to things that God does not desire for us.**