



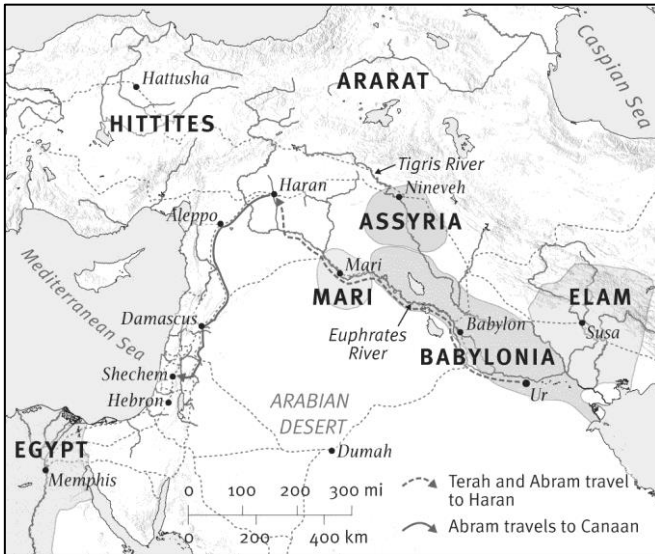
## Lesson 9

### Abram leaves the city of Ur and goes to Canaan

#### Introduction

In our last lesson we looked at life on earth after the Flood. We saw that, very quickly, people again became evil and turned away from God. They soon forgot His judgment of the earth by the Flood and built a high tower, Babel, to try and keep them safe. God gave them all different languages and they separated, travelling to different parts of the world.

#### The Family of Terah



In Genesis 11 we meet a new family of people. The family elder was called Terah; he and his family, which included three sons, lived in Ur of the Chaldees. This was a city not very far from Babylon. The Chaldees were a special tribe of magicians who led people in worship of false gods and in Ur they worshipped the moon god.

In the book of Joshua, we read that some of Terah's family worshipped these gods:

“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.'” Joshua 24:2

However we know that one of Terah's sons, Abram, believed in the one true God. The Lord

God appeared to him in a vision of glory (Acts 7:2) telling him to leave Ur, his family and his father's house to travel to a country that God would show him. This must have been a very hard and painful thing for him to do – to leave everything he had in life and to trust in God in this way, it was a remarkable act of faith. He was 70 when he set off on this journey and it took him 5 years to reach the place God would give him.

#### Learning to Live by Faith

It was a very long journey for an old man. He did not know where he was going when he set off yet he believed that God would show him the place!

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

Hebrews 11:8

There is an important lesson here for us. He both believed God **and obeyed Him**. Many people today will say that they believe in God but they do not obey Him in their lives. In the New Testament we read that *'faith without works is dead'* – we should show our belief in God by obeying His word. We saw at the beginning of this course that this is what God asked of Adam. We have seen that this is what Noah did and it is what He asks of every man and woman.

However we shall see that Abram's life was not always one of faith. Sometimes he tried to solve his problems by making his own decisions without praying to God for help. This never worked out, but he learned lessons from his mistakes and had the humility to return to God and ask Him for guidance.

Our lives are like this, we often fail in our discipleship but if we return to God and ask His forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ and for guidance in our own lives, then He will always provide these for us.



### The first Promise to Abram (12:1-3)

As Abram learned to live by faith, God made seven great promises to him and the first one was given before he set off from Ur.

“Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 12:1-3

It is useful to write down the parts of this promise and think about what it means.

#### PROMISE 1

1. I will make a great nation from you.
2. I will bless you and make your name great.
3. I will bless those who bless you.
4. I will curse those who curse you.
5. Through you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Although Abram and Sarai, his wife, had no children at this time, he was told that a great nation (the nation of Israel) would descend from him and that his name would be widely known and honoured. Through him God's salvation would be made available to all the nations of the earth.

So Abram and Sarai, together with his nephew, Lot, were led by God to the land of Canaan. When they arrived there God spoke to him again.

“Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.”

Genesis 12:7

This is a lovely response of faith and showed Abram's commitment to God – he made an altar to worship the one true Lord God.

### A Famine in the Land (12:10-20)

We read next that there was a famine in the land. We can imagine Abram's concern for his wife and those who had travelled with him. They had left the comfort of the city of Ur and come to this strange land, now there was a severe shortage of food. There was probably a lot of criticism of Abram and a demand for him to solve the problem, so he took his household down into the land of Egypt.

“Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.”

Genesis 12:10

Notice what he did! He did not send down into Egypt to buy some food, he took everyone to live there! He left the country that God had just promised to give to his descendants, the country he had spent five years travelling towards and went into another country altogether without asking God if he should do this.

Sometimes in our lives we face great problems like this. If we are farmers our harvest might fail, or we might lose our job or our home or have very bad health problems. Being disciples of Jesus does not mean that God will free us from all problems in this life, what is important is how we face them.

“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?” My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Hebrews 12:5-7

This is difficult teaching but it is a test of our faith and trust in God. We shall see how Abram learned to do this and how he realised that the promise of eternal life in God's kingdom to come was so precious to him that he could endure the problems of his life in faith and patience. It was a lesson the Apostle Paul also





learned, he was a man who suffered many things but wrote *'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us'* (Romans 8:18).

### Abram in Egypt

Abram and his wife, Sarai, travelled down to Egypt. She must have been a very beautiful woman, even though she was about 70 years old at the time. Abram was worried that the Egyptians might kill him so that they could take Sarai and he suggested that she tell them that she was his sister (she was his half-sister) and not his wife. How foolish this was!

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt desired Sarai and took her into his house. He gave Abram many flocks and herds and servants for her but God warned him in a dream not to touch her because she was Abram's wife. Pharaoh sent away Abram and Sarai with all that they had and they returned to Canaan. We shall see later that all of this wealth caused Abram problems in his family over many years.

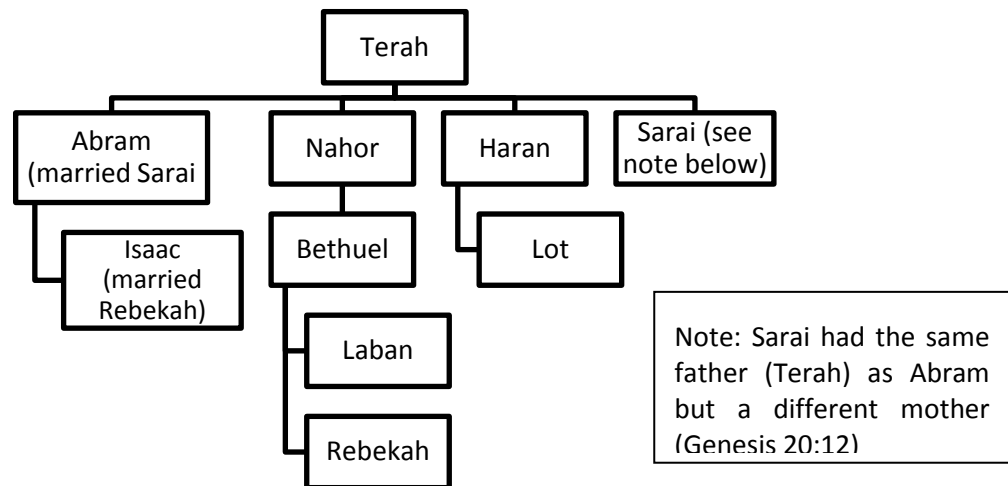
What do we learn from this? We have seen that Abram acted in a faithless way when he went to live in Egypt; we now see that this decision brought another, huge problem for him. Life is like this. We make one bad, faithless decision and find that we are then faced with many more problems as a consequence. God forgives us our sins but we always have to live with the consequences of them.

### Family Problems (13:1-9)

At the beginning of chapter 13 we read that Abram went back to Canaan and *'as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning...and there he called upon the name of the Lord'*. It is as if he wanted to start all over again and put the problems of Egypt behind him.

He was very rich with many animals (the wealth he brought out of Egypt) and there was an argument between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot about pasture and water for their herds. There was not enough room for them both and they needed to separate.

Lot was Abram's nephew who had travelled with him and at this point it is useful to look at the relationships within Abram's family.



Although God had promised the land to Abram, he generously offered to let Lot choose where he wanted to go. Lot looked over the land and decided that the valley of the River Jordan, near Sodom and Gomorrah, was very fertile and he would go and settle there even though the people who lived there were very wicked. This was a bad decision; Lot made his choice because he thought he could get rich living near Sodom. He did not pray to God for help and advice and he did not put his spiritual life first. In a later lesson we shall see how this brought disaster for him and his family. Whenever we make decisions without putting God first in our lives we put ourselves in spiritual danger.



Abram was different; he had learned from his mistake in going down into Egypt and was content to have whatever land God would give him. The Lord now makes the second promise to him.

“The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.

I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.” Genesis 13:14-16

We can write the parts of this promise like this.

#### PROMISE 2

1. I will give all the land that you can see to you and your descendants.
2. I will give it to you forever.
3. Your descendants will be very many.

So Abraham and his descendants were promised all the land he could see from a high mountain – the land of Canaan. We have seen that his descendants, the Jews, would be a great nation, now we learn that this country would belong to them. It would be given to them and to Abram forever. But we know that Abram died and is still dead, how can he have the land forever?

The only way this can happen is for him to be resurrected from the dead and to be given eternal life by God. Notice that he is not promised a reward in heaven. His reward will be on earth – in the land of Canaan (which will later be called Israel). This reward has not yet been given to him but the promise will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns to the earth and the resurrection of the dead takes place.

The Apostle Paul wrote about Abram and his faith in the Letter to the Galatians. He wrote that everyone who believed in God like Abram would receive promises from God also – *“that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe”*.

God’s reward to faithful men and women is eternal life on earth. It will be given when Jesus returns to set up God’s kingdom

#### SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned the following key points.

- Abraham is an example of a man who learned to live by faith in his life.
- Because of his faith God made great promises to him about his future.
- Although he made mistakes, he learned to put God first in the decisions he made.
- The Bible tells us he is an example to us; we should learn to live like this.
- Unlike Abram, Lot put himself first instead of God.
- God forgives us our mistakes and sins but we always have to live with the consequences of what we do

