

Genesis 11:10-32 and 12:1-8

Before the time of Noah's flood, God had dealt directly with the Godly line of Seth.

No doubt it was a large portion of the river of humanity that began with Adam and Eve, and grew into the vast Antediluvian civilization.

But over time, Seth's descendents lost their separation, and the evil of the world swallowed them up.

Finally, because **"GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,"** He found it necessary to narrow down mankind to just eight

persons, that is, faithful Noah and his family.

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Again the human race grew, but for the most part, they went their own way.

They ignored God's command to "**replenish the earth,**" and instead combined their energies to build a tower to their own glory.

But this monument to pride and rebellion was short-lived.

Genesis 11:8-9 **"So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.**

⁹ **Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter**

them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

Yes, God had accomplished His purpose in spite of man's rebellion, but from that point on, He began to deal differently with Adam's race.

In Genesis 10, God had recorded the genealogy of all of Noah's sons, but beginning at Genesis 11:10, He records only the genealogy of Shem, from whom would come His chosen vessel, Abram.

Yes, Abram was the man through whom God would eventually bring blessing to *all* the nations of earth.

So from this point on, the Old Testament scriptures deal almost exclusively with those matters that pertain to Abraham and his descendents, Israel.

It was as if God had separated from the vast stream of humanity one little rivulet, and through it, channelled all of His blessings to mankind.

In God's timetable, it would be many years before this nation would develop from this single individual, but, in the end, his descendents would be God's answer to lost humanity.

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First of all, Israel was called upon to be a witness to the one true God in the midst of universal idolatry.

Isaiah 43:10-12 says, concerning Israel, "
**Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD,
and my servant whom I have chosen: that
ye may know and believe me, and
understand that I am he: before me
there was no God formed, neither shall**

there be after me.

¹¹ I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

¹² I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God."

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Also, this nation was to illustrate to the rest of the world the blessedness of serving the one true God.

Deuteronomy 33:27-29 **"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.**

²⁸ Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be

upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

²⁹ Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

As we now know, Israel often turned aside from following the Lord, and so marred their testimony to the world, and for that, they have paid dearly.

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Also, through that one nation, the world has received God's divine revelation.

And Moses reminded them of their awesome privilege and responsibility.

Deuteronomy 4:5-8 "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

⁶ Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

⁷ For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

⁸ And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

And to their credit, we can say that they
have been faithful in preserving God's
Word down through the centuries.

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But most importantly, it was through this
nation that Jesus Christ entered the
world to seek and to save lost mankind.
That was, and is, the best news that the
world has ever received.

It was the *good news* proclaimed by the angel
to those lowly shepherds in the fields
outside of Bethlehem.

Luke 2:10-11 **"And the angel said unto them,
Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good
tidings of great joy, which shall be to
all people.**

**¹¹ For unto you is born this day in
the city of David a Saviour, which is
Christ the Lord."**

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And so God's great plan of salvation began with one man, Abraham, whose lineage we find here in Genesis 11:10-27.

We will just read a few verses of this divine record, starting at V 10:

V 10-11 **"These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood:**

¹¹ And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters."

And then, skipping down to the end of this genealogy, we read --

V 24-26 **"And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah:**

²⁵ And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years,

and begat sons and daughters.

²⁶ **And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran."**

This chapter records the fact that Abram was a descendent of Shem.

And Shem was the son that Noah blessed, saying, "**Blessed be the LORD God of Shem.**"

So it is not surprising that God's blessing would come through Shem's descendents.

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And although it is not nearly as important as this last fact, there is something else that becomes apparent as we read this lineage.

As time went on, the average lifespan of man became progressively shorter.

For instance, Shem reached the age of 600 years, while V 32 tells us that Terah

died at the relatively young age of 205.

Some have theorized that it was the absence of the vapour barrier around the earth-- which existed in Antediluvian times and was destroyed during the flood-- that has accounted for this change.

They believe that the harmful rays from the sun, which are no longer shielded from us, are the cause of this decrease in life span.

Of course, that is just a theory.

However, whether this is true or not, there certainly was a definite need for a shorter lifespan.

After the flood, this longer lifespan would have been a real advantage in accomplishing God's purpose to repopulate the earth, but it would have

eventually resulted in overpopulation if it had been allowed to continue.

So, in His wisdom, God has provided for an ideal balance of population to the earth's resources, and if man had not upset that balance by his careless destruction of the world's resources, there would still be enough for all.

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Having made this slight detour, let us now turn our thoughts once again back to Genesis 11, and the man Abram.

V 26-30 **"And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.**

27 Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in

Ur of the Chaldees.

29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child."

This was not a promising start for a man who was to become the father of many nations.

But with God, all things are possible. We need only to have faith in His promises.

And scripture tells us that Abram became a man of *great faith*, but as we will see, it was not always so.

If we look ahead to Genesis 12, we will see that God had given Abram a command and a promise, but he had not obeyed.

Genesis 12:1-3 **"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:**

² And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

V 1 says **"the LORD had said."**

So, at some earlier time, God had communicated with Abram and given him a

very definite command, and a wonderful promise.

Pure faith would have acted immediately upon such a command.

But, as is often the case in our own lives, Abram did not act upon the light that he had received.

In fact, it was his father Terah, not Abram, that initiated the move from Ur of Chaldees.

Genesis 11:31 **"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there."**

I don't really know what Terah's reasons could have been for setting off for

Canaan. Certainly it was not God's command that moved him, for Terah was an idol worshipper.

But apparently God had overruled to accomplish in Abram's life what faith would not.

However, because Terah's journey was not really a journey of faith, it did not end in Canaan.

They got no further than Haran, and there Terah was content to dwell.

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But in time, God overruled once again to accomplish His will.

V 32 **"And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."**

Then, and only then, with unimpeded steps,
Abram made his way to the place that
"The God of glory" had called him to.

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But his unwillingness to immediately obey
God's command because of family ties
had held back God's blessing.

There is a lesson here for us.

The ties of this earth, although they may
not be sinful in themselves, if they
take first place in our lives, can
prevent the full realization of the
"calling of God" and His accompanying
blessings.

And sadly, we are all prone to take the
lower ground rather than respond to
God's best for us.

It takes great simplicity and integrity of
faith to rise to the height of God's

plan for us, and to follow obediently
in His Will.

In Ephesians 1:17-20, Paul prayed for the
believers--"That the God of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may
give unto you the spirit of wisdom and
revelation in the knowledge of him:

¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding
being enlightened; that ye may know
what is the hope of his calling, and
what the riches of the glory of his
inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ And what is the exceeding greatness
of his power to us-ward who believe,
according to the working of his mighty
power,

²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he
raised him from the dead, and set him

at his own right hand in the heavenly places--."

If the Holy Spirit can only open our understanding to the truth that our home, our portion, our hope, and our inheritance are all above "**where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,**" then we will never be satisfied to only seek a name for ourselves, or just lay up an inheritance on this earth.

No, the two things are incompatible.

And this heavenly calling is not just an empty dogma, a powerless theory, or a crude speculation.

No, it is either a divine reality, or it is absolutely nothing.

Was Abram's call to Canaan just a speculation?

Was it a mere theory about which he could talk or argue, while at the same time continuing to live in Haran?

No, it was a divine truth, a powerful, practical truth.

He was called to Canaan, and God could not possibly sanction his actions in stopping short of that goal.

And as it was with Abram, so it is with us.

If we want to enjoy God's approval and God's divine presence in our lives, we must seek by faith to act upon His divine call.

And what is God's divine call?

Well, it could be to a particular ministry, or a particular place, or a particular task. But before all that, there is another call.

He is calling each one of us to seek, in experience, in practice, and in moral character, the fellowship of His Son, both in His *rejection* here in this world, and in His *acceptance* in heaven.

In Abram's case, it was death that broke the link that bound him to Haran, and, in our case also, it is death which breaks the link with this world.

We must realize, in a practical way, that we have died with Christ and have risen with Him in newness of life.

To us the cross of Christ must be what the Red Sea was to Israel.

It forever separates us from the land of death and judgment.

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The hymn writer encouraged us to seek this higher ground when he wrote---

♪♪ *I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day –
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*

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Although Abram's faith had not been strong enough to break the tie with his father, nevertheless, upon his death, it was strong enough to venture forth at God's command.

How do we know it was faith that moved him? Well, because the book of Hebrews tells us that.

Hebrews 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."**

God had waited patiently during those days that Abram tarried in Haran.

There had been no new revelation there, for God does not give us more light until we are obedient to the light that we already have.

But during those wasted years, Abram had always clung to God's promise, and as soon as Terah died, he immediately stepped out by faith.

Of course, Abram would naturally desire to obey God's command, but also I believe he really longed to go to Canaan, for it was there that God's blessings could be realized.

In his judgment, Canaan, which he had never actually seen, was far better than Ur of the Chaldees, his own home.

And Canaan was far better than Haran, the
choice of his father.

His heart could not be content with either,
so he moved forward by faith, **"not
knowing whither he went."**

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Was Abram taking a foolish risk, not only
for himself personally, but for his
family and possessions?

No, faith rests on a far more solid ground
than the evidence of the senses when it
rests upon the Word of God.

Our eyes and our hearts may deceive us, but
God's promises can never fail.

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Genesis 12:4-5 **"So Abram departed, as the
LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went
with him: and Abram was seventy and
five years old when he departed out of**

Haran.

⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

As you will remember, God had originally said "---Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."

Abram had made a good start. He had obeyed God's commandment by pulling up stakes and journeying to the land of Canaan, a land he knew nothing about.

However, he had not completely obeyed the Lord, for he brought Lot along with him.

This was a mistake, and would hinder his progress, for partial obedience never brings God's full blessing.

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Nevertheless, Abram had entered a new phase in his life.

To a large degree, he was now walking by faith, and although many times he would fail, for the most part, faith would characterize the rest of his earthly pilgrimage.

Now that Abram had actually stepped out by faith and obeyed God's command, one would have thought his arrival in Canaan would be quite glorious.

But there was little notice of his coming by the inhabitants. He was just a wanderer, and a sojourner in the land. No, his journey of faith was not over yet. God had tests and trials ahead to mature his faith, which would last for a lifetime.

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V 6 **"And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land."**

The presence of the Canaanite in the land must have been quite intimidating. At God's command, he had moved to Canaan, leaving the home he knew, and for the most part leaving his kindred, and yet the Canaanites, who were the rightful owners of this land, were a very wicked people.

They were not likely to be good neighbours,
and yet they were the ones that he must
depend on for permission to set up his
tent.

It must've been a trial of his faith and of
his patience.

I wonder what Abram's thoughts were as he
sat around the fire with his wife, his
nephew, and his servants?

They were all depending on him.

Off in the distance he could see the lights
of the Canaanite cities like angry
eyes.

They made him feel so small and vulnerable.
It seemed that the ungodly were much better
off in this land than he was.

And it often seems to be the case that the
child of this world does better in it
than the child of God.

But the Lord was there also, and that would make all the difference.

V 7 **"And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land."**

This was the first time that God had told Abram that some day His descendents would actually own this land.

Previously, God had told Abram that He would make him **"a great nation,"** but no land had ever been mentioned.

So this intimidating land of the Canaanites would some day belong to *his* family!

What a promise!

That night he must've gone to bed with an easy mind, and slept like a baby.

Yes, the Canaanite was still in the land, but now Abram's mind was not focused on them, but only upon Jehovah who had

appeared unto him, and would give him
this land.

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Here is another lesson for us.

The Canaanite in the land is a picture of
the power of Satan.

But instead of being occupied with Satan's
power that would keep us out of our
inheritance, we are called upon to
appropriate Christ's power to bring us
in.

Satan would ever keep us in spiritual
poverty, but we need not live in
defeat, for **"greater is he that is in
you, than he that is in the world."**

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So Abraham was called upon, as every child
of God is, to not become demoralized by

the circumstances that surround him,
but rather to believe upon the Lord.
And although Abram's faith did falter at
times, nevertheless, God gives
testimony to his life in Hebrews 11:8-
10, as being an *example* of faith -- "**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.**

**9: By faith he sojourned in the land of
promise, as in a strange country,
dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and
Jacob, the heirs with him of the same
promise:**

**10: For he looked for a city which hath
foundations, whose builder and maker is
God."**

So instead of having the "**spirit of fear,**"
we need to cultivate the spirit of
worship, as Abram did.

V 7-8 **"And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and
said, Unto thy seed will I give this
land: and there builded he an altar
unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.**

**⁸ And he removed from thence unto a
mountain on the east of Bethel, and
pitched his tent, having Bethel on the
west, and Hai on the east: and there he
builded an altar unto the LORD, and
called upon the name of the LORD."**

In Canaan, the altar and the tent were
typical of Abram's life.

He was a worshipper of God, and a stranger
and pilgrim in the land.

And although the Lord made him a rich man,
the only piece of ground he would own

was the field that he purchased to bury his wife Sarah in.

Acts 7:5 **"And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child."**

What an unusual way to live.

Yet God has called each of us to live in the same way.

In this life, we might be rich or poor. In the end, God controls that, but our real inheritance is not in this earth. It is in Christ, and that's where our heart should be.

So as Abram left Haran, and launched out at God's command and promise, so the

Christian must launch out in faith for Christ.

But in doing so, we will also find that the Canaanite is still in the land.

As we push out from the shore of circumstances he will find it is not all smooth sailing.

Again and again we will be called upon to encounter rough seas and stormy skies; but we will find that these trials are all designed to lead us into a deeper and more mature experience of the faithfulness of God.

After all, if the skies were always without cloud and the ocean without ripple, the believer would never know God's keeping power.

And we really need to learn the lessons He has for us.

When things are going smoothly and peacefully, we are so prone to mistake the peace of circumstances for the peace which flows from fellowship with Christ.

The Lord knows this, and will often stir up our nest if we are nesting too comfortably in circumstances rather than Christ.

So we should not judge the righteousness of our path by the absence of trial, for, in fact, the path of obedience is often the most trying.

Yes, the easy path is often not the right path, and that was the next lesson that God needed to teach Abram.

And, Lord willing, that will be our next lesson, as we journey on with Abram.

