

Sent: Wednesday, October 31, 2018 9:02 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 11:26-12:20

"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your kindred and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. And I will make 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 dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed!'"
(Genesis 12:1-3)

Genesis 11:27 introduces us to the "records of the genealogy of Terah"--the father of Abram--who followed in the line of Shem, who followed in the line of Noah, who followed in the line of Seth, the son of Adam! And yet Abram, the son of Terah, was brought up in a family, and a culture, that "lived beyond the River (Euphrates)--and served other gods" (Joshua 24:2)!

Genesis 1--11 graphically depicts how God's perfect creation was ruined by man's rebellion and sin! And so, as Arnold notes, the call of Abram and the events of his life "are the first steps in a new way of salvation"--the redemptive plan of God for mankind! Bringing man into a place of blessing! It's a fascinating fact (writes Arnold) that Genesis "devotes only two chapters to the creation of the world, and one to the fall of Adam and Eve, but over thirteen chapters to the life of Abram"! And so "the Bible seems much more interested in revealing how individuals relate to God and the world around them than to the intricacies of how the world was created!"

We learn more about the call of Abram--and his story--from the account of Steven (the martyr), in Acts 7:2-4: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you!' Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it (this land) to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him! But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years! And whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I Myself will judge, said God, and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place!" (And that goes well beyond tonight's lesson but gives insight to the rest of the story!)

Hebrews 11:8-10 says: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was not to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going! By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise! For he was looking for a city which has foundation, whose architect and builder is God..."

Genesis 12:4 says, "So Abraham went forth as the Lord had spoken to him!" Arnold calls this "one of the most amazing verses in the Bible!" The central message is that Abram "launched out in radical obedience to God's call on his life"!

Abram left three things that were natural sources of security for anyone, but especially for an ancient Near Eastern nomad--his country, his people, and his father's household! And what did he get in return? A "set of promises"! From God! (Not the proverbial "promises, promises" idea!)

Arnold calls these "promises central for the rest of the patriarchal narratives of Genesis--and, indeed, for the rest of the Bible"! (And they reveal to us that "true security and fulfillment in life are achieved by living for God and depending on His promises!")

The first stop in the land of Canaan was at a place called Shechem--the approximate geographic center of the land of Canaan--and there he discovered that the land was occupied by the Canaanites! Surprise! But the great thing about it was that "the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land!' (Must have given Abram great comfort and confidence just to know that God was there, with him!) And "so Abram built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him!"

Well, there's more! Another stop at another place between Bethel and Ai--not far from a city that would one day be called Jerusalem--where he built another altar and "called upon the name of the Lord"! As his way of worship!

We can see Abram growing (progressively) in faith as he experiences "progressive revelations" from the Lord! But then! Another test! A "famine in the land," and he ends up heading to "bread basket" of Egypt!

So why didn't Abram get the land of Canaan for his inheritance right then and there? Although left unsaid, he obviously wasn't ready for it! And it wasn't God's timing either! (Later, in Genesis 15:13-16, after his return from Egypt, God would appear to him again to re-affirm the covenant, but also to let him know that his descendants would first "be strangers in a land that was not theirs (speaking of Egypt), where they would be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years...and afterward would come out with many possessions...and then in the fourth generation return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite (Canaanites) is not yet complete"! Wow!

And so, God's timing is everything!

You know the rest of our story in last nite's lesson! Abram goes down to Egypt, as a place of security? Out of fear? Isaiah 31:1 says: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help...and trust in chariots...and in horsemen...but look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!"

And then another crisis hits when Pharaoh has an eye for Sarai and actually brings her into his harem, with the understanding, conveyed by Abram, that she is his sister! A "half-truth" perpetrated by Abram to "save his neck" but also win him favor with Pharaoh! All of which results in God's judgment on Pharaoh and Abram's exposure to Pharaoh! And so Abram is unceremoniously driven out of Egypt! Taking lots of stuff with him, as it turns out! Willmington writes: "There's no sadder situation in the world than when an unbeliever rebukes a Christian for some wrong doing!"

Suddenly our hero's actions are not very heroic, as he (Abram) moves from faith to fear (writes Arnold)! And looking very much like a conniver! More importantly, his actions "threaten to counteract the program God has set in motion...a theme that recurs as we travel through the patriarchal narratives of Genesis!" (MacArthur)

But, as we might expect, God rescues Abram from the threat that he himself has created and, by grace, provides a means of preserving His promises! Turns out to be just another step in God's plan for bringing mankind into a place of blessing! But with a long way to go! Much more on the life and lessons of Abraham in the lessons ahead! Next week, its war and the appearance of a king named Melchizadek!

Meanwhile, go forth with Abraham's God, rest on His promises, and be a blessing!
Lowell