

STORY

God gets Abram started in a new life - Genesis 12:1-9 and 13:1-18

TEACHER PRAYER

O LORD, God of Abraham and my God due to Your favor given me in Jesus Christ, I adore You for getting Your plan of salvation moving forward by salvaging Abram from his heathen background. Always help me to present You to my students as You really are: full of generous compassion to those lost in the sinfulness of their human nature, and willing to put Your hand out to lead and nurture people like me. I praise You for this now and forever. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Place names such as Bethel, Ai, Negev, Zoar should be located on a map.

OUTER AIM

God's hand in Abram's life led him to earthly prosperity and eternal treasures.

INNER AIM

God's hand supports and saves those who put their trust (faith) in Him.

BACKGROUND

(*cf. also Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol. 1, pp.46-53*)

The titanic event of the Flood had faded in memory and its lesson lost; within two hundred years the human race had deserted God's grace to Noah and had suffered its confrontation with Him at Babel. In the fallout, family units became tribal sheikdoms in the Mid-East. Abram was born in Mesopotamia (Ur of the Chaldeans), in the tenth generation after the Deluge. Abram married his half-sister Sarai; his brother Nahor married a niece Milcah, daughter of the other brother Haran, who died early, leaving his boy Lot in the care of uncle Abram. Terah and tribe left their homeland for Canaan, arriving at a place 600 miles NW from Ur and 400 miles NE of Canaan, naming the place Haran in memory of the deceased son. What prompted a family of idolaters (Joshua 24:2) to emigrate into the unknown? Perhaps it was due to a carry-over influence from Noah. Abram could have heard the account of the Deluge directly from Shem, who in turn had learned the account of Adam and the Garden from Methuselah. It is important to us to know what God DID with Abram; Scripture is replete with references to this man who stands as the premier example of God's ways with sinners--the way of salvation prompted by God's grace (without human deserving), produced by the Seed of Abraham, and received by faith (without human contributions).

Following are notes on verses of the account from Genesis 12:1-9 plus entire chapter 13.

v.1

(The KJV helping verb "had" is intended to harmonize with Acts 7:2.) This is Jehovah Who thrust His hand into a heathen family and reactivated His salvage operation for victims of Satan.

Three levels of sacrifice are here required of Abram: separation from his homeland, from his tribal relatives, and from his father's household. All this was in Abram's best interests, of course, so that he be rescued from idolatrous influences (Satan's hands). For all these perceived losses, God compensated with His blessings for Abram's well-being.



vv.2-3

Seven blessings are poured out on Abram and on others via Abram:

- God will make of Abram a great (earthly) nation
- God will bless him personally, in earthly and eternal ways
- God will make his name great (Gal.3:6-9)
- "And be thou a blessing" - he should do what he could to benefit others
- God will bless those that bless him - whoever treats him well will be favored by God
- God will curse him that curses Abram - his personal favor with God makes his enemy to be God's enemy
- God will bless all the families of the earth in and through Abram

This closing blessing surpasses the others because it reaches out to all sinners of all time; thus the saving effect of Messiah intends to go beyond Jewry with no racial, geographic, or time limits. (cf. John 8:56 and Mt.8:11)

v.4

Abram's faith-living produced obedience; his nephew shared in this venture of faith into the unknown. At age 75, Abram was "middle-aged," a time to settle down, but off they went on a 350 mile journey with servants and flocks.

v.5

Abram as patriarch was respected; his household had already become prosperous; Canaan had also been the goal of his father Terah; Abram walked "by faith, not by sight" toward whatever God had in store for him (cf. Heb. 11:8).

v.6

The first locale worthy of record is Shechem in the center of Canaan, 34 miles N of Jerusalem; everywhere they encamped they were the foreigners in a land farmed and ranched by resident Canaanite tribes. No directions came from Jehovah as to how Abram was to cope with them.

v.7

It was time for Jehovah to become more specific about Abram's property rights in Canaan. God let him know that it was intended for his descendants ("seed"). Abram wanted to thank God and give a public testimony to his God's mercies (already received as well as pending) by building this altar, a place of worship to Jehovah.

v.8

Onward to Luz, ten miles N of Jerusalem; It received the name Bethel ("house of God") from Jacob. Again Abram gave public testimony to his God amidst the heathen Canaanites.

v.9

As nomads did, he regularly "pulled up stakes," moving southward to the Nebev, an arid region (where little noteworthy seems to happen in today's news).

Ch. 13, the entire chapter brings us back again into Abram's God-promised homeland.

vv.1-4

Following his dismissal in disgrace from Pharaoh, Abram with retinue returned to the southern section of Canaan, back to the site marked by the altar, where Abram felt prompted again to "call on the name of the LORD." (cf. Gen. 4:26; this phrase means public worship of Jehovah.)

vv. 5-7

The flocks, etc. of Lot were distinct from Abram's, and due to expansion they could no longer coexist on the same range. The shortage of resources would also affect the resident population.

vv.8-9

Abram took the lead in offering a brotherly solution that would benefit both; it would mean, however, that they separate, an unwelcome prospect for Abram whose only "seed" at present was Lot. Knowing that the LORD would not let him be the loser, Abram gave Lot freedom to choose the direction of his own future.

vv.10-11

Lot made a selfish choice, and they separated--family ties broken, futures divergent.

vv.13-14

The problem was--as it always is--that bad companions corrupt good morals. Lot's soul was endangered by people "exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD" as his companions and friends. The LORD did not permit Abram to wonder if this was a change in His blueprint.

vv.15-16

On the contrary, regardless of Lot's actions, God had put Abram's name on the entire map; this was Abram's personal land (a new detail) and was to belong to his progeny "a long time"-- another detail added to the promise of 1:7.

As to Abram's potential "seed," he would have progeny "as the dust of the earth"; that is, innumerable. In this we see a reference **not** to the Jewish race, but to the Christian Church, the true sons and daughters of Abram, who from Adam to the last Day are Abram's seed (Gal. 3:29).

vv.17-18

God wanted Abram to experience his new homeland so as to embrace it totally, with all his senses. So as this man of faith walked also by sight into the reality of God's promises, he again stopped to honor Him and publicly praise Him.

STUDENT PRAYER

God of Abraham and my God also in Jesus, I thank You for introducing me today to Abraham, one of my wonderful grandfathers whom I will get to know better in our heavenly Canaan. Thanks for leading him onward and forward in his life so that he could stay close to You and learn to depend on You always. Do so for me, too, please, in Jesus' name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

- As introduction: does the student know anyone who has taken a vacation/tourist trip to Palestine? It's called the state of Israel today, though it is NOT God's Israel at all. Tourism there is not a new thing; Abram did it too, but only because the LORD told him to go there and look it over, end-to-end and side-to-side, for it was going to belong to him and his children. So his tour was a sightseeing trip to get acquainted with his new homeland. More importantly, other things God told him affect us today: especially the news that he would have innumerable "children" and that God would channel His best blessings to the whole human race through this one person, the "father of all believers" in God's Christmas gift for sinners.
- Because place names are sprinkled throughout the account, here's the time to help students develop a map sense of Bible lands. Use a large chart or overhead projector. An outline map of Wisconsin or other state (New Jersey is comparably sized) superimposed on a projection of Canaan will provide a sense of comparative distances and spaces.
- Have students check other Scriptural references to Abraham in the New Testament in order to gain a fuller impression of his value to us.

APPLICATIONS

1. Nobody with any heart of love will choose to separate from his mother and father for a selfish or trivial reason. It's only the heart of love for Jesus that can do so IF AND WHEN that becomes necessary in order to be faithful to Him and to protect oneself from Satan's errors. That's why the CLC came into existence (Luke 19:29-30, Rom.16:17-18).
2. When we live and function as God's children, we become channels for His blessings to our neighbors and friends, because God favors those who favor us. On the other hand, anyone who is hostile to God's child gets into trouble with Jehovah Himself.
3. Public worship and personal testimony as to the Savior are ways of bringing salvation within reach of lost souls. "Calling on the name of the Lord" is the exact opposite of using His name in a careless, non-respectful way. A child of God lets people know that's the way he lives.
4. A child of God can afford to be generous with friends, relatives, neighbors, and strangers. And that's simply because we CANNOT be losers by loving others as our Savior did.

5. Especially troublesome for youngsters is the problem of peer pressure. Just as germs spread by contact, so do bad morals, sinful attitudes, ungodly talking, dirty jokes, etc. Choose your friends as if your life depended on it!

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Hebrews 11:8 - *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out....*

Matthew 10:37 - *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of me."*

John 8:56 - *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad."*

Middle any of the above and...

Luke 12:29-30 *"Assuredly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come everlasting life."*

Galatians 3:29 - *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Upper any of the above and...

Romans 16:17 - *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.*

I Peter 2:11-12 - *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles....*

HYMN CHOICES

"I'm But a Stranger Here" (TLH #660, 1-4)

"God Bless Our Native Land" (TLH #577, 1-2)

"Lo, Many Shall Come from the East and the West" (TLH #415)

"Lord, Thee I Love with All My heart" (TLH #429)

"A Pilgrim and a Stranger" (TLH #586, 1.4.7)