**July 29, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 12 of the Book of Genesis**

**The Call of Abram**

We have covered the first 11 chapters in Genesis which encompass about 2000 years. The remaining 39 chapters will cover about 350 years as we see much more detail in God’s Word. Vernon McGee wrote that the preceding chapters were about 4 events: creation, the fall, the flood and the Tower of Babel. Now the Bible shifts emphasis to telling the stories of people beginning with Abram and his wife Sarai. At the end of chapter 11 we were introduced to Abram, a descendant of Shem who was native to Ur of the Chaldees. Unlike the preceding chapters where a devout man like Enoch is only given 4 verses, 11 chapters are devoted to Abram/Abraham. Ur was in the southeastern part of Babylonia near the Persian Gulf, now a part of modern Iraq. Abram had traveled with his family to Haran which was a city in Assyria about 600 miles north of Ur. God tells Abram to leave his country, people and father’s house. Whether God called Abram while he was in Haran or earlier while he was still in Ur (see Act 7:2-4) it is clear that God wanted to separate Abram from the negative influence of his surroundings which included his father Terah (see Josh. 24:2).

God chose Abram to receive the following blessings:

He would make him a great nation

He would bless Abram

He would make his name great

Abram would be a blessing

God would bless those who blessed Abram

God would curse those who cursed Abram

All people on earth would be blessed through Abram

God had previously chosen one man, Noah out of all the human race to be a righteous remnant and here He chooses one man to create the nation out of which would come the Savior of mankind. God chose Abram because he was a man of faith (Heb. 11:8). While Abram responded to God in obedience by departing for Canaan, it may have been after his father died in Haran. The meaning of the Hebrew name Terah is delay and Terah possibly delayed Abram’s response to God’s call. Notice that there is no recorded communication between God and Abram until Abram entered into the land of Canaan. It could be that God was waiting for Abram to fulfill his obligation. At Shechem God told Abram that He would give the land to Abram’s offspring and Abram builds an altar to give God glory. His grandson Jacob would also build an altar at Shechem (Ge. 33:20). Shechem was in the northern part of the West Bank which would become Samaria. Abram moved on from there going to Bethel where he built another altar to God. Verse 8 says he pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai indicating that he took up residence there but did not build a permanent dwelling. At this time of his life, Abram appeared to be nomadic as he moved on from Bethel southward toward the Negev desert, perhaps seeking a warmer climate.

This relocation led to what McGee refers to as a lapse of faith. The Negev is in the southern part of Israel (Canaan) along the border of Egypt. When a famine occurred in Canaan, Abram moved again going to Egypt. He had trusted God enough to leave his prior home and go to Canaan but he would not trust that God would provide for him and his family during a time of famine. Matthew Henry wrote that God sent the famine not only to punish the Canaanites but to test the faith of Abram. David Guzik noted that Abram found it easier to trust God for far off promises than right now needs, an affliction I think we are all guilty of at times. Notice there is again no communication between God and Abram while he is in Egypt.. This lapse of faith is compounded in verse 11 when Abram tells his wife to pretend that she is his sister which is a half-truth since she was his half-sister. Guzik notes the following:

A half truth is a whole lie

Abram trusted more is his deception to protect him than trusting God

If you want to do something wrong, you can find some good reasons to do it and if you can’t think of the reasons, the devil is happy to suggest them.

Sarai was apparently a very beautiful woman and Abram feared that he would be killed if it was known that he was her husband. Because of her beauty, Sarai was taken into Pharaoh’s house to be part of his harem. Abram was treated well also because of his “sister”. He acquired substantial livestock and servants before Pharaoh discovered Abram’s deception. God protected Sarai from being defiled by a gentile keeping her womb pure to birth the son from whom Jesus would be a descendant. Pharaoh confronts Abram but does not punish him knowing that he is under God’s protection. Instead he sends Abram and his family with all the possessions they had accumulated during their time in Egypt. One of those possessions was a maidservant who would have a part in another episode of disobedience by Abram. Despite his flaws Abram was still a righteous man selected by God to receive special blessings and God certainly delivered on all the promises made to Abram.