

Chapter 12 takes up Abram as he left Haran after his father Terah died. He resumed his response to God's call to leave his homeland and his relatives. He had left his homeland but didn't complete the call to leave his relatives and go to a land God would tell him of. We have no record of God revealing his destination to Abram but Abram obeyed not knowing where he was going.

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.

Chapter 12 immediately presents us with God's original sevenfold promise. This promise was given before he left Ur of the Chaldees.

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; 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

I will make of thee a great nation, (a patriarchal blessing flowing to many descendants).

I will bless thee, (personal blessings of happiness, contentment, joy).

and I will make thy name great; (esteemed)

and thou shalt be a blessing: (to others)

I will bless them that bless thee, (center of God's thoughts and channel of His blessing.)

and curse him that curseth thee: (center of God's affections) (protection from harm)

and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

(channel of God's blessings to others.)

These wonderful and noble promises transcend the natural, self centered ambitions of mankind in general. They are, simply put, GOOD! They far exceed man's simple desire for survival, or beyond that, the lust for power, property and pleasure. Though nations of differing languages were then still forming and jockeying for advantage and competing for land and resources, God declares "**In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**" He was not promised world domination or even a world of plenty and world peace. But that somehow through his as yet undesignated descendant would come blessing for every family on earth. In him ALL families, not just his own, would be BLESSED. What a lofty, noble calling, one worthy of every man because he was made in the image of God. But few aspire to it and only One has fulfilled it. Wealth, power, and personal standing would not be used to satisfy selfish ambitions but to enable blessing of all mankind.

Clearly this did not take place in Abram's first generation offspring. But it would come to pass and

Abram's faith firmly lay hold upon the promises. God did not give him the benefit of a timetable or other details he must surely have wondered about. No. God graciously used Abram's experiences, his victories and his failures, his doubts and his unswerving devotion as a setting to patiently unfold the details throughout his life. All along He revealed more and more of Himself and His purposes. More than mankind had known until then. We too come to know God and His purposes though the narrative of Genesis and the comments about Abram found throughout scripture. They are also played out in our own lives and experiences. Of course we now know where this was all headed, but Abram didn't. We know the One of whom the promises were fulfilled. We are beneficiaries from the promises Abram believed and of his faith. But even with that background God makes our knowledge and faith real to us through various trials and experiences as we seek to walk with Him by faith.

Abram had acquired wealth and servants while in Haran and had quite an formidable entourage when he finally entered the promised land. Apparently there was no established border, guards or immigration authorities, and no king or other central government. Canaanite tribes occupied the land. He passed through it and stopped in a place called Shechem on the plain of Moreh, centrally located in a hilly part of the land. There the Lord appeared to him confirming His promise and repeating that He would give this land to Abram's seed. Note, not to Abram personally, but to his descendent who wasn't even born yet. Abram was clearly put on notice that he personally would not ever possess this land, but that his descendants would. As it turned out he had been there as a pilgrim and alien for 100 years when he died there of old age. Believers today are upon similar ground We will reign with Christ over the earth but remain pilgrims and strangers now.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. {in faith: Gr. according to faith}

1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Abram had brought his nephew Lot along though not specifically instructed to. Peter tells us Lot was a "righteous soul." We don't know if he had faith in God when he accompanied Abram from Haran, but he did by the time Abram interceded for his rescue from the destruction of Sodom (chapter ____). Nevertheless Lot proved to be the cause of a number of crises in Abram's life. And the Moabites and Ammonites, descended from Lot's immorally conceived sons, thereafter proved to be a continuing thorn in the side of the Abram's legitimate descendants for centuries.

At first Abram moved about in the land of his promised inheritance but he then built an altar and “settled” near Bethel not far from the heights overlooking the Jordan valley. Though he apparently was secure there, a famine in the land moved him to leave the promised land and continue south down into Egypt. There is no indication he sought God’s mind regarding the famine before he took his own solution. Abram’s promised descendant was placed in jeopardy by his move to Egypt. Sarai was almost taken away from him permanently because of their fears for Abrams life. Fears that would not have had occasion to rise if he had abided in the land. He was walking in his own wisdom, away from God, and was moved by fears to seek humanly contrived solutions to perceived threats. First the famine threatened his livelihood. Then his flight from it put his life in jeopardy because of his lovely wife. Then their plan to escape a perceived threat to his life put his wife and their marriage in jeopardy. Only because God intervened did His promise of the seed remain intact. Satan has known since Eve that fulfillment of the promised Seed would be his ultimate undoing. He has continually, actively sought to thwart God’s plan to take control of the world away from him and return it to the chosen Man, the Seed of the woman. There would be more threats to this promised Seed

in Abram’s own lifetime and many more in the ensuing centuries leading on to the birth of Christ. As you read the Old Testament watch for them and mark God’s faithful interventions to preserve His promise intact.

We should learn from Abram’s experiences. We need not, and should not, go into the world to seek security upon this earth. It just about swallowed Abram when he tried that.

One other thing. Can you imagine how Sarai felt when she was taken from her husband? And that he laid no claim to her when she was taken? Despite their agreement, with her consent (if not at her suggestion), to be called his sister, the reality of her actual abandonment must have deeply wounded her spirit and dampened her love and affection and her respect for him. Yet, by the grace of God, she spontaneously called him her lord when laughing within herself upon hearing the Lord’s promise she would give birth to a son by Abram within the year,

1Peter 3:6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.(NKJV)

By Ronald Canner, May 19, 2010.