

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121- 7 God's Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 11-12)

This lesson tells of one of the greatest promises God ever gave to any person. The God of glory appeared to Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia, saying that one of Abram's descendants would bless the whole world. Though Abram did not fully understand what that meant, God was referring to the Messiah. This name means the anointed one, the Christ. The Messiah's coming was foretold by many Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah, many hundreds of years before He was born. But Abram had a hard time believing God's promise. He and his wife had been unable to have a child.

One day God spoke to Abraham. "I want you to leave your family and country and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and your name will be great. I will bless you, and I will also bless everyone else who blesses you. And I will curse anyone who curses you. All the families of the earth will be blessed because of you."

Abram lived with his father Terah. They lived in a city called Ur of the Chaldeans, in what today is the country of Iraq. Abram has two brothers. So the boys grow up and one of the brothers had a son named Lot. That brother then dies. Abram grows up too, and marries his half-sister Sarai, but they aren't able to have any children. So, instead of Abram leaving his people and his country, somehow Abram convinces his father Terah and his nephew Lot that they should all leave Ur and go to the land of Canaan, as Abram's God has instructed. They followed the great Euphrates River north and got as far as Haran, where they stopped and settled down.

Haran was like most places. The people did not worship God but worshipped idols and gods like the moon-god. This place was about 400 miles north of the area where the Tower of Babel had been built, but it was not the place in Canaan where God had instructed Abram to go. They stay there until Abram's father, Terah, died at the age of 205. By this time Abram was 75 years old. So after Terah dies, Abram remembers what God commanded him to do and resuming his journey, he obeys God and continues his pilgrimage to Canaan. He does not know exactly where God is leading him, but he knows God is directing his path.

Abram's blessing actually had several parts. For him personally, it was the promise he would become a father. Secondly, his descendants would become the chosen people of God, the great nation of Israel. Abram's name would become great as he experienced God's blessings. God would fight for him. And finally, one from his line would be the Messiah, who would bless the whole world, by bringing mankind into a family relationship with God.

So Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and left Haran and arrived in the land called Canaan, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. It was another journey of about 400 miles. This ancient land is now the country of Israel plus parts of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I am giving this land to you and to your children." So Abram built an altar and worshipped the Lord at a place called Shechem (Gen 12:7). The Canaanite people of the land had a special tree they worshipped there, but Abram worshipped God there. Abram trusted God's word though he had not yet seen the promises fulfilled. It is

written in the Bible that “Abram believed the Lord, and God credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

Sometime later, a severe famine hit the land. So Abram gathered up all he had, his servants and flocks, and goes to Egypt to live. In those days Abram is viewed as a foreign prince. To enter Egypt, he needs to make a treaty of peace with the ruler, called Pharaoh. Tradition required the foreigner to give his daughter or sister as a wife to Pharaoh as a peace guarantee. Moved by his fear and not by faith, Abram says to Sarai, “The Egyptians will see you are a beautiful woman. They will kill me in order to get you. So tell them you are my sister.” He was right, for the Egyptians saw that Sarai was beautiful, even though she was 65 years old. When Pharaoh heard that she was not married, he took her into his house to become one of his wives. He treated Abram well because of this, thinking the man was her brother.

But God became angry with Pharaoh because he had taken Sarai into his house. Sarai was to be the mother of a great nation. She was not to be married off to some foreign king. Disease hit Pharaoh's family, and everyone became seriously sick. Somehow Pharaoh learns, perhaps in a dream, that the cause of his trouble was Sarai. Pharaoh called Abram to his palace for a confrontation. “Why did you do this to me? You said she was your sister. Now I find out she is your wife! Take her and get out of here!”

So Abram took his wife Sarai and his cousin Lot and went back to Canaan. While in Egypt Abram had become very rich. His wealth included sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and servants. The family returned to Canaan and settled near a place called Bethel, which means “the house of God.” There Abraham worshipped at the altar he had built earlier, and called on the name of the Lord once again.

This story is important because it shows the beginning of God’s plan to bring people back into relationship with Himself. He chose one family, just as they were, and began to shape them into what He wanted them to be. In the same way God takes you and me, just as we are, and begins to shape us according to His plan, if we will come to Him and believe His promises. Abram and Sarai believed the promises of God. They made mistakes, because of fear, but they continued to try to obey God. Even in the middle of trials and trouble, obedient faith is what He looks for in every believer.

The main truth illustrated in the life of Abraham is that obedience to God brings blessing. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but He rewards all those who earnestly seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

To review the lesson, answer these questions:

1. Why did Abram tell Pharaoh that Sarai was his sister and not his wife?
A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “He was afraid that Pharaoh would kill him in order to get Sarai ,” you are correct.
2. What was God’s command to Abram?
A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “God told him, ‘Leave your family and country and go to a place I have chosen for you. I will make you into a nation and your name will be great’,” you are correct.

3. What made Abram righteous in God's sight?

A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said because, "Abram was righteous before God because of his faith in God," you are correct.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Finally, go tell this story to a friend who has never heard it before. After telling the story, ask your friend to respond to this question, "What do you think God is looking for in people today?" The answer, according to the life of Abraham, is faith in God's promises and obedience to His directions for each person's life, even if the circumstances seem impossible. Memorize this verse from Genesis 15:6, "Abram believed the Lord and he credited it to him as righteousness."