

The LORD graciously called Abram out of idolatry and promised to bless him with a great name, countless descendants and a land in which they would dwell as a great nation. Like Abram, we do not deserve the blessings of God and yet He calls us out of a sinful lifestyle and offers us salvation and an inheritance beyond our wildest dreams if we will follow Abram's example of faith.

Genesis 12

¹ Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

The LORD had apparently already spoken to Abram before this ("the LORD had said"), instructing him to leave the area where he was living and his family in order to go to a land that the LORD was promising to him. Stephen, preaching before he was stoned, made it clear that the LORD had spoken to Abram while he was still in Ur (**Acts 7:2-4** "² And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, ³ And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. ⁴ Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.") Abraham's family were idol worshippers (**Josh. 24:2** "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.") but the LORD called Abram to leave this idolatrous influence behind. We see the beginnings of Abram's obedience in the previous chapter: **Gen. 11:31** "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." Perhaps Abram convinced his father Terah to go or else the record was written to show Terah taking the lead since he was the head of the family.

² 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: ³ 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.

"And I will make of thee a great nation" – At this time Abram and Sarai did not have any children but the LORD promises that Abram's descendants will be numerous enough to become a great nation (Israel).

"and I will bless thee, and make thy name great" – The LORD promises to prosper Abram and give him a name that is honored even to this day. Abraham (Abram) is considered the father of both the Israeli and Arabic people.

"and thou shalt be a blessing [prosperity; a gift]" – Not only will Abram be blessed but he will be a blessing.

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" – The LORD's stance toward people will depend on their attitude toward Abram and his descendants. Those who hold Abram's descendants in high regard and help them will be blessed by God and those who hold them in disdain will be under the curse of God. The Jewish holocaust is no doubt one of the reasons for the defeat of Nazi Germany in WWII.

"and in thee shall all families [clan; tribe; nation; race] of the earth be blessed" – The people of all nations and races are blessed by Abram and his descendants. They are blessed as they follow Abram's example of faith: **Gal. 3:7-9** "⁷ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." God used Jewish authors to write the scriptures (Rom. 3:1-2). Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, came as a descendant of Abram (Abraham). Israel will continue to be a blessing to the world in the millennial kingdom as well as in the new heavens and the new earth.

⁴ So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. ⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

"So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him" – When the LORD originally spoke to Abram, he had traveled with his father Terah along the Euphrates River from Ur to Haran, a crossroads trading town in northern Mesopotamia that provided the best route for entering the land of Canaan without crossing the great desert. Now that his father was dead, Abram continues to obey the LORD's command to migrate to the land that the LORD had promised to him.

"and Lot went with him" – His nephew Lot accompanied Abram and Terah when they left Ur (Gen. 11:31) and now Lot continues to migrate with Abram.

"and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran" – We are told the age of Abram when he takes the step of faith of leaving Haran to enter the land of Canaan. He is already in the latter years of his life.

"And Abram took Sarai his wife..." - Abram does not go alone but takes his wife, nephew and all his belongings. The phrase "the souls that they had gotten in Haran" probably refers to servants that Abram and Lot had acquired while they were in Haran.

"and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" – Abram takes the next step of faith and obedience in his walk with God by leaving behind everything he knew to enter the land the LORD promised to him and his descendants.

⁶ And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. ⁷ And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

“And Abram passed through the land...” - Abram makes his way into central Palestine to an area called Sichem (Shechem). Moses, the author of Genesis, wants us to know that Canaan was not a vacant land but was occupied by the Canaanite people even in Abram’s day. This fact makes the promise the LORD makes next even more significant since only the LORD could fulfill it.

“And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land” – We have no record that the LORD had spoken to Abram since the original command for him to leave his country, kindred and his father’s house back in Ur (Gen. 12:1). If this is true then it appears that the LORD had nothing new to say to Abram until he obeyed and entered Canaan. Now that he had obeyed and was in the land then the LORD appears to Abram and promises that He would give this land to Abram’s descendants.

“and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him” – Abram responds in worship and offers a sacrifice.

⁸ And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, *having* Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

Abram leaves the plain of Moreh and continues his journey southward until he comes to a mountain between Beth-el and Hai. Apparently Moses is giving his readers the modern name (at least for him) because the place was not named Beth-el until Jacob named it in Gen. 28:19. Hai is the city of Ai that gave Joshua so much trouble in Josh. 7-8. It is here that Abram builds another altar and calls on the LORD in faith and worship, likely thanking the LORD for what He has been promising.

Genesis 12:9-13:13: A famine causes Abram to go to Egypt and there he lies about Sarai’s identity for fear of his life, saying she is his sister and not his wife. When his lie is discovered he is expelled from Egypt. Abram returns to the altar he had built between Beth-el and Hai and once again calls on the name of the LORD. Soon afterward he and Lot have to part company because the flocks and herds of both men have grown too large for them to dwell in the same area.

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵ For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

Once the last of Abram’s kindred had gone, the LORD renews His promise to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abram. The LORD promises to give to Abram and his descendants everything that he could see in all directions as an eternal possession.

¹⁶ And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

“And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth...” - The LORD expands on His promise to “make of thee a great nation” (Gen. 12:2) by comparing the number of descendants Abram will have to the number of grains in all the dust of the earth. Later the LORD compares the number of Abram’s descendants to the number of stars in the universe (Gen. 15:5). What an amazing promise!

“Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee” – The LORD gives Abram permission to go wherever he likes in the land of Canaan because the LORD is giving it to him.

¹⁸ Then Abram removed *his* tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which *is* in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Abram obeys the LORD and starts his tour of the land. He comes to the area around the ancient town of Hebron and builds an altar there in order to worship the LORD Who had given such great promises to him.

Genesis 14:1-15:5: The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are attacked by a coalition of kings and prisoners are taken along with the spoils, including Lot who had been living in Sodom. When Abram hears of this he puts together a small army composed of his servants and pursues the coalition of kings. The LORD enables Abram to defeat the kings and rescue Lot and the other prisoners. Afterward the LORD appears to Abram in a vision, encouraging him not to fear because He would protect Abram. Since Abram at this time has no children, he asks the LORD about who his heir would be and the LORD promises that Abram’s own son will be his heir. The LORD then renews the promise of Abram’s numerous descendants, comparing them to the number of stars in the universe.

Genesis 15

⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

The Hebrew word for “believed” means “*trust*” or “*confidence*.” When Abram put his faith in the LORD, the LORD “counted” or considered it as righteousness. Abram was justified, not by his works, but by faith, so that the Apostle Paul uses Abram as an example of justification by faith by quoting this verse in **Rom. 4:1-3** “*1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*” Paul goes on to make the point that it was not works or any religious adherence such as circumcision that justified Abram: **Rom. 4:9-10** “*9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*”