

Genesis Chapter 12

Chapters 1-11 speak of the human race in general and 4 great events:

1. Creation.
2. The fall of man.
3. The flood.
4. The tower of Babel.

Chapters 12-50 speak about 4 individuals: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

- As we get going in this narrative, it is important to note that while God is using Abram's testimony to instruct us – there are likely others out there who believe, Job and Melchizedek to name a couple – we shouldn't assume that Abram is the only believer in the true and living God.
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V: 1 *“Now the Lord had said to Abram:”* – past tense

“Jehovah Debar” “He who speaks”

Isaiah 52:6 *“Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am He who speaks: behold, it is I.”*

Isaiah 30:21 *“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “this is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.”*

John 10:27 *“My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.”*

- Abram is going to live this out in a very literal sense.
- It appears that at first Abram was only partially obedient or obedient in stages:

Genesis 11:31-32 *“And Terah took his son Abram ... and they went out from the Ur to go to the land of Canaan.... And came to Haran and dwelt there.”*

1. Get out of your country – the Ur of the Chaldeans & go to Canaan.
2. Get away from your family.
3. Get away from your father's house.



- Judging from Chapter 11 it's difficult to determine if Terah initiated things, or if it's just a way of communicating that Terah accompanied Abram on his journey.
- In either event this is not what God directed, Abram was to get away from his family (Lot) and specifically from his father's house.

- It appears that Terah was caught up in the pagan worship of the land.

Joshua 24:2-3 “²And Joshua said to all the people, thus says the Lord God of Israel: your fathers, including Terah, the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. ³Then I (contrast) took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.”

- Initially they are moving, but they stop in Haran, and are there until Terah, Abram’s father dies.
- Obedience to God’s Word keeps us on track with God’s plan in our lives.
- Disobedience to God’s Word, stalls & delays God’s work in our lives.
- Abram doesn’t hear from God again until he is obedient to the first thing that God spoke to him.
- Haran was an important city of Northern Mesopotamia. Located on the Balik River, a tributary of the Euphrates River.
- Located along a trade route, later mentioned in **Ezekiel 37:23**.
- Excavated in the 1950’s and determined to have been established in the middle of the 3rd millennium BC and occupied through the Assyrian and Babylonian times up through Islamic times.
- The city was also a major center of worship for the moon god Sin.
- Haran is also the name of Terah’s son, Lot’s father who had died.
- The name means “Mountaineer”.
- It seems possible that Abram & company were just going to their relative’s city and not particularly leaving the land of the Chaldeans at this time, just the Ur of the Chaldeans.
- We don’t really know how long the layover in Haran lasted, just that it took place until Terah died, then they left.
- The name “**Terah**” literally means “delay”.

- God is so gracious in dealing with Abram, and with us.
- The New Testament gives us a few glimpses into Abram’s faith:

[Stephens defense:](#)

Acts 7:2-4 “And he said, brethren and fathers, listen: the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,³ and said to him, “get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.”⁴ The he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, he moved him to this land in which you now dwell.”

Hebrews 11:8-19 “⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

- This portion of scripture goes on to describe the other things that Abram did by faith, a progression of faith, from one event to another.
- Also note that these New Testament references don't make any mention of Abrams failings in the area of faith.
- The New Testament dispensation is seen through the blood of Jesus, God only see's our victories, our sins and short coming are invisible, not spoken of – like Abram's. ☺
- When I think about what it is to truly be a Christian, I realize at times how far short I have fallen; when I'm not as patient, kind, or thoughtful as I should have been with other people, or when I question the things of God and don't always trust God completely – He doesn't see those things, He sees us through the blood of Jesus – and that puts a smile on His face, and mine. ☺
- God doesn't bless us because we're good; He blesses us by virtue of His grace upon us. If we think that God only blesses us when we're good, then we miss out on, we don't see often that God blesses us all the time – as children of God we should be looking out for and expecting His blessings all the time.
- None of the blessing are by our merit, faithfulness, or our diligence to do anything – we are blessed because of His grace – His incredible love for us!
- God knew exactly how Abram would respond, and how quickly – yet we see His blessing upon Abram.

V: 2-3 God blesses Abram and makes several promises to him: When God said these things, Abram hadn't actually moved or done anything yet, God is making these promised by on His grace to Abram.

1. He will make Abram a great nation. During the reign of King David, Solomon, Uzziah and others Israel was a great nation. God will someday restore the borders that He intended and things will be different than they are today.

Genesis 15:5 “Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

- Who’s the strongest nation in the middle east today? Israel - hands down.
- 2. [He will bless Abram](#). The Jews have been blessed with intelligence and ingenuity, they far surpass the world in Nobel Prizes, high tech patents, all kinds of innovations, they’ve made the desert blossom and produce food – seemingly the Midas touch – envied by the entire world, at the same time persecuted and reviled.
- 3. [God will make Abram’s name great](#). To this day Abram’s name is great amongst the Jews, the Muslims, and Christians.
- 4. [Abram shall be a blessing](#). – Innovations, technology, music, arts, medicine.
- 5. [God will bless whoever blesses Abram](#). – We have been blessed because of our support for Israel, because we have been a refuge to the Jews – in keeping with God’s word.
- 6. [God will curse whoever curses him](#).
 - Look at the nations that have cursed Israel:
 - Egypt went from being a great world power to a virtual wasteland,
 - The Greek civilization defamed the Temple, and soon thereafter fell.
 - The Romans persecuted the Jews – and their empire disintegrated.
 - Spain persecuted the Jews through the inquisitions, and was reduced to a 5th rate nation.
 - Anybody seen a Hittite lately? Or a Moabite?
 - Germany persecuted the Jews through the holocaust and was destroyed completely.
 - There are and have been others whose day is coming. (Sadly it’s too long a list to be comprehensive.)
- 7. [In Abram all the families of the earth shall be blessed](#). – The Messiah shall come through Abram’s lineage and save the world.

1 John 4:14 “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”

- There is another way to look at this situation, these blessings – and that is in contrast to the tower of Babel.

- God promised Abram that He would make him a great nation and bless him; he would be lifted up above all the other nations and peoples.
- God said that He would make Abram's name great, give him identity.
- God said that he would protect Abram, that he would be his security.
- On the contrary the builders of the tower of Babel said let us build a city and a tower whose top is in the heavens – they wanted to be lifted up, elevated.
- They said let us make a name for ourselves, they also wanted identity.
- They said lest we be scattered, they wanted security, and sought it in a city.
- They wanted all the things that God would have given them if they had just been willing to humble themselves and ask – God willingly gave these things to His children who would simply follow Him.
- These two verses constitute the 2nd & 3rd Messianic prophecies in the Bible thus far. The 1st being given to Adam and Eve about the “Seed of the woman”.

V: 4 Abraham was obedient.

Our faith is manifest through our actions, through our obedience.

James 2:17-22 “¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, you have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble! ²⁰But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²²Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” (Complete, manifest)

Jesus said:

John 14:15 “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

- Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran. (Never too late to hear the Lord and start over.)
- The listing of Terah's sons (**Genesis 11:27**) was not necessarily in birth order, but in order of importance to the Biblical narrative.
- God waited for Abram so that He could be gracious to him.

Isaiah 30:18a “Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you...”

V: 5-6 Abram, Sarai, and Lot – all their stuff and their servants leave Haran and head West towards Canaan.



- 500 miles from Ur, Chaldees to Haran.
- 300 miles from Haran to Canaan, Shechem / Bethel area.

Hebrews 11:8-9 “⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.”

- Shechem was a city in Northern Israel / Canaan at the time, along an important trade route. Shechem is pretty much the “center” of Israel.
- Shechem was built on the slope or shoulder of Mt. Ebal; the name literally means “shoulder”. Shechem will be mentioned many more times as we go through the Bible.



V: 7 “*Then the Lord appeared to Abram...*” (2nd time.)

- This is a significant 1st. Technically it is the 2nd time because Steven in Acts 7 tells us that God appeared to Abram while he was still in the Ur of the Chaldees.

Acts 7:2-4 “And he said, brethren and fathers, listen: the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, ³and said to him, “get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.” ⁴The he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, he moved him to this land in which you now dwell.”

- A first because it is the first time in scripture that we read of an “actual appearance” of God. (Form?)
- God had “walked” and spoken with Adam, Enoch, and Noah, and He may have been visible in some way – but scripture does not say so specifically.
- Here however there was a visible manifestation – a “Theophony” – a pre-incarnate appearance of God. (Theophony vs: Christophony)

John records the words of Jesus:

John 1:18 “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

Jesus said:

John 14:21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

- Abram was obedient – then the Lord appeared to him.
- God appears to Abram 7 times, each is a progressive aspect of Abrams growing faith.

God spoke a promise to Abram:

“To your descendants I will give this land.” (1st of many instances.)

Genesis 15:18 “On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.”

Deuteronomy 4:40 “You shall therefore keep His statues and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

- When God says He will do something it is the same as a promise, He will keep His word!
- We’re not just talking about the 67 borders, or what was established in 1948 by UN decree. We’re talking from the river Nile to the river Euphrates.

Genesis 15:18 “... To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.”

- God repeats and affirms this promise to Abram and his descendants many times.
- With the revelation / manifestation of God in the presence of a true believer comes the natural response – worship.

John 4:23-24 “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and Truth.”

2 Chronicles 16:9 “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him....”

- Abram builds his first altar to worship God.

V: 8 Moving from the area of Shechem farther south, into Canaan to Bethel. Abram is walking in obedience doing as God had instructed him.



- “Bethel” means “house of God” and “Ai” means “ruin” or “heap”. He’s made his camp between the two.
- There’s always a choice to be made, we’re always between two places – where we were, and where we’re headed. Life really is a series of choices.

Deuteronomy 30:19 “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;”

- Abram builds an altar there on the mountain and calls upon the name of the Lord. Abram initiates, he is seeking after the Lord!

Psalm 118:29 “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

- Abram is hooked! God has appeared to him twice now, God has spoken to him – and now he wants more!

Psalm 34:8 “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”

Psalm 27:4 “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple.”

V: 9 Abram moves farther South.

- Speculating a little bit, at this point it appears from V:8 that Abram is seeking Lord’s counsel and will, “*called on the name of the LORD*” he inquired of the Lord and now he is moving based on his understanding of God’s will.
- South from Bethel could be Jerusalem, Hebron, Beersheba, Arad, or on into the Sinai, all towards Egypt.

V: 10 Now Abram crosses a line, literally into Egypt. The famine in the land of Canaan would seem to be the motivator.

- Notice, Abram goes “down” to Egypt. Throughout scripture Egypt is symbolic of the world and the flesh, whenever people go to Egypt – it is always down. Whereas going to Jerusalem is always “up to Jerusalem.”

- This is a test of Abram's faith – there is always the testing of our faith, and it's always progressive. (This is just a test of the emergency Christian system)
- God told Abram to go into the Land of Canaan, he's done that. There has been no mention of Egypt.
- We need to keep doing the last thing we heard until we hear otherwise.
- We're given the reason why, at least from Abram's standpoint – famine in the land.
- Abram is responding to what he sees as opposed to what he's been told.

2 Corinthians 5:7 "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

- It gets worse for Abram as we'll see in the next few verses.
- Once we get away from God's word, from His counsel – it seems to always lead to sin and pain.

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

- Just because God speaks and we hear doesn't mean that we stop listening – it's a lifetime of listening and responding to His voice.

When Elijah ran away from queen Jezebel:

1 Kings 19:11-13 "11Then He said, "go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; 12and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. 13So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?"

- Sometimes when we inquire of the Lord and seemingly He doesn't respond or speak, it might be because He's already spoken, He's already given us direction and we need to stick with that.

Isaiah 30:21 "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, this is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."

- There is that old saying about the Bible / The Word of God – that book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from that book!

Paul asks the Galatians:

Galatians 3:3 “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

- We don't see Abram calling on the name of the Lord at this point, nor do we see God speaking or appearing to him.
- The next time we see these two things is after Abram is back in the land of promise, back in a place of obedience. Not that God didn't protect Abram or take care of him, we just don't see Him speaking to Abram at this particular time.

James 1:5 “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

- When Abram eventually leaves Egypt, after having compromised himself, having subjected himself to rebuke by Pharaoh – he also leaves with amongst other things – a servant girl by the name of Hagar – a choice that will have far reaching consequences for the rest of his life and much of humanity.

V: 11-13 As most of us that have experienced enough of life know, one compromise usually leads to another, which is what these next few verses portray.

- The aging process is still progressing slowly; the gene pool is not as corrupted then as it is now. Sarai is about 65 years old and still a babe!
- Abram concocts a lie (½ truth, Sarai is his ½ sister), leaning on his own wisdom.

Genesis 20:12 “But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.”

- His decision making is hamstrung by his flesh, his fear, his worldly wisdom, and his seeming independence from God when he should be depending on God.

Judges 17:6 “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

1 Corinthians 3:19 “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He catches the wise in their own craftiness;”

Proverbs 3:5-7 “⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. ⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil.”

- We should appreciate this passage for what it is – an honest and forthright account of how Abrams' faith was developed – in a progressive manner.

- This brings up decision making: the basis for making decisions in general.
- If we set the truth of God's word aside, then our decisions are fleshly, sensual, based on emotions, fear, or perceived needs at the time – often times not achieving the results we desired.

Proverbs 29:25 “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.”

- Yet when the Word of God is the final authority we know that His will is perfect and that God will make the best decisions for us.

Romans 8:31 “... for if God is for us, who can be against us?”

Psalms 119:105 “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Psalms 119:165 “Great peace have those that love Thy Law, and nothing causes them to stumble.”

V: 14-15 Sarai is again described as “very beautiful.” Which given the circumstances or the way things worked may not have been a blessing.

- Short term situation of cause and effect, reaping and sowing.
- If Abram hadn't gone to Egypt – he wouldn't be dealing with this.

Galatians 6:7-8 “⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸for he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

- Pharaoh ruled with such impunity, doing as he pleased without regard to his people or his creator. To just take women from their family or household involuntarily? This describes tyranny. One way or another God will deal with this.

Proverbs 6:29 “So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent.”

V: 16 Abram begins to seemingly profit from his sin – he gets more wealth (Hagar is in that package as well). – The “soft south wind” – false confirmation that somehow he's in God's will. That's just the enemy telling us soothingly, “sleep, sleep, you're ok...”

Eliezer speaking:

Genesis 24:35 “The LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys.”

- God has already blessed Abram, Pharaoh isn't going to out bless him. Pharaoh treated Abram well for Sarai's sake, but at what cost? This is a dangerous situation for both men.

1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

V: 17 "But God" - "*But the LORD...*" - God intervenes in the affairs of men!

- At a time when it seemed that neither Abram nor Sarai could save themselves from this situation – God intervenes!

1 Corinthians 4:10 "... We are weak, but You are strong!"

"*Because of Sarai*" – God protects Sarai in / from a bad situation.

Speaking of wives, Sarah is the only women named as a good example to follow in the whole Bible.

1 Peter 3:3-6 "³Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – ⁴rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. ⁵For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

- Sarai wasn't just beautiful on the outside...
- Here we see that God is gracious, even when we are in sin.

Psalms 105:14-15 "¹⁴He permitted no one to do them wrong; yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, ¹⁵saying, "do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm."

V:18-19 Abram gets called on the carpet by Pharaoh.

Numbers 32:23 "But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out."

- Why did you lie? I thought you were a Christian...

Proverbs 21:1 "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes."

- Pharaoh could just as easily have killed Abram as anything – yet the Lord directed him in what he would do – all part of God's plan.

V: 20 Abram leaves Egypt, having been chastened by Pharaoh and by God.

- God called Abram out of the Ur of the Chaldees into the land of Canaan, not to just go on from there to Egypt.
- We can leave one sin for another if we're not careful.

Matthew 12:43-45 “⁴³When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”

- It has been said that nature abhors a vacuum. It is the same in spiritual situations as well. We can't just put off sin; we also have to put on Jesus Christ. We have to fill that void – or the enemy will fill it for us.
- Otherwise we will just go from sin to sin – we need to hear God's voice and seek His perfect will in our lives.
- Abram leaves Egypt and heads back to the land of promise and it's not long after that that we read two important things:

Genesis 13:3-4 “³And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”

- Sometimes when we've lost our way we need to get back to the place where we last heard from the Lord, back to the last point of contact. Once there he called on the name of the Lord.

Genesis 13:14 “And the LORD said to Abram...” God is so faithful!