

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 11:31, 32; 12:1-9.

LESSON 8 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "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: 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" (Genesis 12:1-3).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 11:31, 32;

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.

³² And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

Genesis 12:1-9.

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:

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.

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.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I A Call to Separation

1. Terah starts for Canaan, but fails to go all the way, Genesis 11:31, 32;

Hebrews 4:1;

¹ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Ruth 1:6-15.

⁶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

⁷ Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

⁸ And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

⁹ The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

¹⁰ And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

¹¹ And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

¹² Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

¹³ Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

¹⁴ And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

¹⁵ And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

2. Abraham is called to leave his country, kindred, father's house, and religion, Genesis 12:1;

Joshua 24:2, 3;

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.

³ And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

Isaiah 51:2;

² Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

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.

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.

⁹ And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

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 Chaldæans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

3. The Christian is called to separation,

Matthew 4:18-22;

¹⁸ ¶ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

¹⁹ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

²⁰ And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

²¹ And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

²² And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Matthew 10:37;

³⁷ He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Mark 16:15;

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

II Corinthians 6:14-18;

¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Philippians 3:7, 8.

⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

II Promises for Obedience

1. God promises Abraham that He will make of him a great nation, Genesis 12:2;

Genesis 17:6;

⁶ And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Genesis 28:3;

³ And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

Genesis 35:11;

¹¹ And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

Romans 4:13;

¹³ For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Deuteronomy 33:29,

²⁹ Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

II Chronicles 1:9, 10.

⁹ Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

¹⁰ Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?

2. All families of the earth are to be blessed through Abraham, Genesis 12:3;

Genesis 22:18;

¹⁸ And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Genesis 26:4, 5;

⁴ And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

⁵ Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Genesis 28:14;

¹⁴ And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Galatians 3:8, 9, 16;

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.

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Hebrews 2:16, 17.

¹⁶ For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

¹⁷ Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

3. The Christian is rewarded for separation,

Matthew 19:29.

²⁹ And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

III Abraham's Faith, Obedience, and Worship

1. Abraham departs in faith, "not knowing whither he went," Genesis 12:4, 5;

Hebrews 11:8-16.

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.

⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹¹ Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

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.

¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

¹⁶ But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

2. Abraham establishes altars in the promised land, Genesis 12:6-9;

Genesis 13:3, 4, 18.

³ And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai;

⁴ Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

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.

NOTES:

From Ur to Haran

Abram, later known as Abraham, of the family of Shem, was born in ancient Ur of the Chaldees, among an idolatrous people. In fact, all the peoples of that age were idolaters. But among the motley throngs of this eastern kingdom of the Chaldees, God, who knows the hearts of men, singled out Abraham for His call. It is recorded that "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" (Genesis 11:31).

Haran was far to the north, situated on a stream tributary to the Euphrates River and surrounded by mountains. It was a natural stopping place, just a little way off the usual route to Canaan. It was here that God spoke to Abraham. But the wording of the Biblical account, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram," would indicate that God had first called Abraham in Ur; and this is confirmed by the words of the martyr Stephen: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran [Haran], and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7:2, 3). It is therefore apparent that it was out of idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees that God first called Abraham, and that this call was repeated at Haran.

Separation

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Corinthians 6:17). Just as Abraham was called to separate himself from his country, kindred, and father's house, so Christians today feel the necessity of separation from worldly alliances. Either their faith will separate them from the world, or the world will separate them from their faith and their God. When one becomes a Christian, he no longer is a brother in fraternal organisations, lodges, or secret orders. He finds that it is necessary to dissolve business partnership with unbelievers. His ambitions and goals are changed from those of temporal things to heavenly aspirations. Self-denial takes the place of self-indulgence.

Self-Denial

Jesus said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37, 38). God must have first place in the lives of His children -- it matters not whether it be in

the days of Abraham when he had to leave all behind to answer the call of God; or whether it be in the days of the Law which states, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5); or under Grace where Jesus says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Elisha

Elisha felt the Spirit's call as Elijah's mantle was cast upon him, and soon lost sight of his earthly ambitions. The implements of his plough so carefully carved, became kindling wood; and the ox, in whose strength he boasted, became but flesh in the blackened pot, as Elisha left the family farm to follow the man who had power with God. Nothing on earth could stop him as he determined to receive a double portion of that Spirit which sent a thrill through his soul and caused him to leave family, friends, and farm, to become a sojourner and pilgrim on earth. The call of God comes to all to deny themselves and follow Christ.

Paul

Paul suffered the loss of all earthly possessions and ambitions that he might be obedient unto the heavenly call, considering that nothing could compare with that which God had promised him. Through stripes, stonings, and shipwreck; through perils, imprisonments, and privations, he pressed forward "toward the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Do you, as a Christian today, place such a value upon your call?

Faith and Obedience

"Get thee out . . . and I will bless thee . . ." Abraham's blessing was conditioned on faith and obedience. His faith gave him a glimpse of that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," and prompted him to obey God, and step out to what seemed an uncertain future, "not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11: 8). Though he lived as a stranger and pilgrim on earth from that time until his dying day, he had no desire or thought of returning unto the land from which God had called him. Abraham saw plainly what he had to leave; but only by faith as "through a glass, darkly," could he behold that which he was to gain. And his faith held him steadfast unto the end.

When a man answers the call of the Spirit to serve God, and follows the way of true repentance and salvation, he soon realises that there is nothing in the world to compare with that which God has promised. If he continues in this faith, even though he may live out his days in poverty, yet there is nothing that can divert him from that hope that God has placed within his heart (**Colossians 1:23**; ²³ If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;). When the love of the Father comes in, the love of the things of the world goes out (**I John 2:15**; ¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.). Eternal values cannot be compared with earthly things. Faith makes eternal things real to us, and brings the evidence of them into his present life. Obedience is the condition on which the promise of eternal life is fulfilled.

A Blessing

"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." This reveals how close the life of faithful Abraham was to the heart of God. Thus all God's children are as "the apple of His eye," and anyone who touches them, touches the God who chose them. Let him who would stretch forth his hand against them beware, lest, like Jeroboam, he finds his hand withered and helpless. Likewise, those who bless them shall, like Laban, testify 'I have learned by

experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake" (Genesis 30:27).

"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This promise given to Abraham stretches beyond the multitude of Israelites who populate the nations of the world and whose lives have often blessed the nations. It points to Christ, the Redeemer and coming King. This is very clearly expressed by Paul, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

The Fulfilled Promise

Someday Abraham, looking out from before the rainbow-circled Throne, across that crystal sea, will get a glimpse of that great multitude as sands upon the golden shore, and will know that these are his sons and daughters, because he answered the call and obeyed God when He said, "Get thee out... and I will make of thee a great nation." Then, gazing up to the stars of heaven, he will see an innumerable company "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," and will hear them cry "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb"; and then he will remember the promise, "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Turning toward the Throne, Abraham will see the object of the adoration of this great company, and will join in praising God and the Lamb, who "took on him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16).

QUESTIONS

1. What three things was Abraham called to leave?
2. To whom do the blessings of Abraham apply?
3. Give examples of those who were cursed by mistreating Abraham's seed.
4. How are all the families of the earth blessed through Abraham's seed?
5. How are we related to Abraham?
6. What did Abraham do upon reaching Canaan?
7. What promises were given to Abraham in today's lesson?
8. What are some of God's promises to a Christian?
9. Name two places where Abraham lived before entering Canaan.
10. Who went to Canaan with Abraham?