

GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Chapter 12 & 13 Study Guide

May 2, 2004

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Genesis 12

I. BACKGROUND, CULTURE & EXEGESIS

Did you know that Abraham is mentioned 74 different times in the New Testament? Did you also know that he is venerated by all three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christian and Muslim, which mean that when you combine these that the majority of the population of the world knows about this one man? But the thing that I think is most impressive is that he is called the “Friend of God!” Because of this lofty introduction you might be thinking that this guy must be as close to perfect as possible but the truth is it that he blew it often - he was not 100% faithful. So where lays the greatness of Abraham? Pay close attention, because in this chapter his story is about to begin.

The first few verses give us a look at his faith - God said go and Abraham went! Then comes the amazing and still relevant unconditional promise of God that is as true today as when it was first uttered. (see verse 2&3)
And if you have ever wondered why God has blessed America look no further than verse 3!

It is noteworthy to see that History paints an interesting portrait of what happens to major powers when they turn against Israel - the Greeks, Romans, Spaniards, Germans, British, Egyptians and Iraqi's have all suffer major declines when they have opposed or betrayed Israel.

As we look at verse 7 we see how God deals with Abraham (and us).

1. The calling
2. Obedience
3. Then the Lord appears

No doubt if it were up to us, we would like the order to be in the reverse order – but not Abraham and this is one of the reasons that Abraham was known as a man of faith.

We also see that Abraham often builds altars. Interesting that his dwelling was always temporary; the altars were the only things that were permanent in his life. (Again I think we would prefer the opposite)

Now comes one of his early failures. In verse 10 we read about a famine in the land and Abraham ups and goes down to Egypt - problem ... God didn't tell him to go. This was a lack of faith. And because of that his time in Egypt is filled with failure and sin. In Egypt , Abraham moves from trusting to scheming and from confidence to fear and interestingly enough we find so altars in Egypt. The lesson here is: never abandon your altar – stay in fellowship with the Lord regardless of how severe the famine may



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be.

Small group Question:

What made Abraham great?

What was the source of his failures?

How can we apply these lessons in our lives

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

A couple predominate themes are found in Genesis. First is fact that this is a Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption.

Second, we see God preparing a people – here we have God choosing and then testing. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Noah for that matter God chooses and then begins to winnow and purge. Remember the goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. It will be here that the initial step will be taken for man’s redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

Author – Moses / **Date** - 1450 – 1410 BC

3. Theology

Have you ever wondered why the United States is always on the side of Israel when conflict arises? The Israelis and Palestinians have been fighting over the Holy land for hundreds if not thousands of years and as long as we have been a nation capable of defending other nations, we have protected Israel and its interests. Well this chapter may offer some insight. In the beginning of chapter 12 God makes a covenant with Abraham that he would bless him and his children. Verse 3 is the important one, God says, “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” God’s promise to Israel was also a promise to those nations surrounding Israel. God essentially said, “if you stay on the good side of Israel, you stay on the good side of God.” Many people attribute the wealth and power of the United States to this very thing. Now this is only one reason that we may feel obliged to protect the nation of Israel, but it is certainly an important one, and it shows the deeply rooted Christian influence in our country.

Small Group

If we were to look around our country, where can we see the hand of God blessing us? Is it in the wealth and power? Is that consistent with Biblical truth?

SOUL WINNER, SO WHAT



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The promises of God are like gold. We must hold fast to the covenants that God has made with us and live in such a way that we trust that he will fulfill them.

4. WORD STUDIES

LAND

(Heb. 'Erets) **Gen. 1:1, 10; 4:16; 12:1; 13:10; Deut. 34:2; Ps. 98:3**

The common Old Testament word land possesses several nuances of meaning, including: earth in contrast to the heavens (**1:1**); land in contrast to the sea (**1:10**); ground as a plot of real estate or a geographical location (**4:16**); the land of sovereign nation (**13:10, 12**); or even the people who live upon the earth (**Ps. 98:3; 100:1**). In essence, all land belongs to God s its Creator (**Ps. 24:1**). Thus when God promised the Israelites the “land” of Canaan, it was His to give, Because the land of Canaan was an important element in God’s covenant with the Israelites (**12:1**), it became one of their identifying characteristics—the “the people of the land” (**13:15; 15:7**).

Word: Abram אַבְרָם Abram = "exalted father" Original name for Abraham אַבְרָהָם
אֲבִי Abraham= = "father of a multitude"

So What Soul Winner:

1. God called Abram to obedience. To follow Him beyond what he could see. God told him He would show him a land. He did not say He would give it to him nor did He say what it was. Any applications here in your life?
2. Abram’s faith is remembered in Heb 11. This should remind us all that it is by faith that we can only please God.
3. Some read this as for Abram’s sake he had to leave His fathers house. It was his comfort zone, what he knew, or what could have tempted or pulled Him down the easiest. Luke 14:26 speaks about how our love for God in comparison to our love for our family should be seen as “hatred”. We must love God that much more and be willing to leave what we know for what He has promised.

Small group Question:

1. Share a time when you had a similar situation to obey God like Abram did. What were your hesitations if any and what made you act out in obedience?

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2. What Land do you need to leave in order to obey God? Is it friends, family, relationships, a job, a place, a comfortable sin, etc... Lack of faith and obedience in God is holding you back. Stop making lame excuses and get off your tail.

5. PROPHECIES OF CHRIST – GOSPEL COMPONENT

Small Group Question:

Soul Winner, So What:

6. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES / PROBLEM PASSAGES

Have the promises God made to Abram been kept? If so how?

First we must note God confirmed these promises with the phrase “I will”, which means that He will do what he said he would do, not dependent on without the help of Abram.

v.2- “I will make you a great nation” Abram became the ancestor of both the Arabic people through Ishmael and the Jewish nation thru Isaac.

“I will bless you”- God guarded Abram throughout his lifetime

“I will make your name great”- 3 major religions, Islam, Judaism, and CHRISTIANITY, all acknowledge Abram as the founder of their faith.

“I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you” v.3- Nations that have welcomed the Jewish people have experienced times of blessings, while those who have persecuted them have suffered severe decline.

***What promises has God made you? Have the promises not been fulfilled because you haven't yielded to GOD's way?**

SOUL WINNER, SO WHAT-

We must always remember when God makes a promise He will come through 100% of the time. Sometimes the way in which he fulfills promises in our life may not be our way, but our ways are not His ways, His are infinitely better.

How could God bless Abram when he told such terrible lies and betrayed his own wife, Sarah?

Abram acted out of fear, not faith. He was not blessed because he was sinless, which he was not. He was blessed because he had faith in God, in his heart loved God, and he bore enormous fruit as a result. Although God blessed him, he faced consequences because of his sin. Just think, if God blessed only the sinless we all would be blessless, praise the Lord, for his love, mercy and grace.



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In what area of your life are you not telling the truth because you are afraid of consequences? At work? School? With Family?

SOUL WINNER, SO WHAT-

By no means does Abram's example give us freedom to lie, however this reiterates that none of us are excluded from sin no matter how holy we are or think we are. There is no question we all will sin, the determining is how extreme will we be to avoid sin, and how faithful and firm will our lives be in response to the promises God has given us. Never should we doubt God and His protection, as He promised in His word "I will never leave you nor forsake you". As long as Jesus Christ has our back, we should live a life fearing no man.

7. Geographical Component

In Genesis 12, it opens with Abram in the region of *Haran*. He and his descendants traveled there from *Ur of the Chaldees* (11:31), which is southeast of Haran. When God calls Abram and tells him to leave the route he takes begins by taking Abram to *Shechem*, then to *Ai*, and eventually down to *Egypt* (vs. 10). A journey that could have been over a thousand miles in duration if one counts the first leg from Ur of Chaldees to Haran.

Small Groups Question

The journey taken by Abram would be the inspiration for one of the major travel routes in the Middle East. The desire to control this route by future empires would cause countless battles and strife between countries. Can you name the route?

Answer: The Kings' Highway

Soul Winner, So What:

The journey of faith that Abram was called to travel was quite an adventure (thousands of miles into foreign land). What journey of faith is calling you to take?



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Genesis 13

1. BACKGROUND, CULTURE & EXEGESIS

When one reads the text one realizes that despite the famine in the land God never told Abraham to go there. The results of the trip to Egypt are disastrous. Abraham is compromised and although he brings back some “wealth” Lot is never the same. It’s an old saying but worthy to be repeated, “you cannot backslide alone”. Everything Abraham received in Egypt later cause him trouble. You could take Lot out of Egypt but you could never get Egypt out of Lot. And then there’s Hagar – stay tuned!

Note the following contrasts that this chapter gives between Abraham and Lot

- Abraham walked by Faith
 - Lot walked by sight
- Abraham was generous and magnanimous
 - Lot was greedy and worldly
- Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God
 - Lot made his home in a city that was built by man and destroyed by God
- Abraham was the Father to all who believe
 - Lot was father to those whose name us a perpetual infamy
- Abraham was made “heir of the world”
 - Lot dwelled in a cave with his possessions destroyed in Sodom

One thing to notice – Abraham was an altar builder but we have no records of him building any altars in Egypt. To his credit – Abraham learned his lesson, he repented, and ‘went up’ out of Egypt. When you disobey the will of God, the only right thing to do is to go back to the place you left him and make a new beginning. No failure is permanent in the school of faith!

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

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Second, we see God preparing a people – here we have God choosing and then testing. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Noah for that matter God chooses and then begins to winnow and purge. Remember the goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. It will be here that the initial step will be taken for man’s redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

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3. Theology

The story of Israel is commonly thought of as a story of a people and this is true to an extent. But really it is only half the story. God did choose for himself a people, the descendants of Abraham that he could love, discipline, and have relationship with. But from the outset of this relationship God tied his people to a place. The land that God chose was what we now know as Israel, the Promised Land. The story of the Jews cannot be separated from the story of their land. I have wondered myself often, as I watch the death unfold on CNN, why in the world are these people killing each other over a plot of land no bigger than Rhode Island? Heck if we dig Israel so much, lets give them Montana or Texas, that will increase their land size a ton and bring directly under our protection. Obviously I'm kidding, but in reality the fight is almost exclusively about that small plot of land in the Middle East, surrounded by hostile Muslim nations. Its all about the Promised Land.

Small Group Question

How could a better understanding of the historical and social aspects of the Jewish struggle help you to understand the bible better?

SOUL WINNER, SO WHAT

The promises of God are worth fighting for, the land, people and vocation that he has bestowed upon you are irrevocable. Don't give up.

4. WORD STUDIES

Word: **Selfishness: Disobedience to God.**

Lot's selfish choice:

After surveying the beautiful land, Lot, chose the best for himself without any consideration for his or his families future. He only cared for himself.

1. He failed to consider the effects his choice would have on **others**. What would happen to his Uncle Abraham, or his family.
2. He failed to consider what **God had for him**. A choice that harms your relationship with God is obviously not a Godly one.
3. He failed to consider the **future**. His choice brought immediate wealth and success at the cost of lowering his convictions.

Lot's selfish choice eventually lost him everything. Gen 19 says he lost his testimony. Not even his sons-in-law listened to his warning. He lost his family. His wife, enticed by the pleasures of Sodom was turned in to a pillar of salt. His daughters fell into the corruption that eventually destroyed Sodom. Lot also lost all his possessions. And his self respect. In Gen 19 we find Lot in a drunken stupor committing immorality with



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his daughters. Without considering the effects of his immediate selfish choice, Lot became known for his folly rather than his faith.

So What Soul winner:

- a. Like Lot many of us give in to our selfish desires that has been born in us. At the moment we chose what is best to satisfy our flesh without seeing down the road. We may even refuse to look ahead because were so selfish. Selfishness is not godliness and it can only lead to destruction. A destruction that may cost much more than we had imagined.
- b. Examine your life. Where are you fooling yourself in the area of selfish choices. Are you dating, working, living, dreaming and scheming in the Jordan Valley? Where have you hardened your convictions and given into that dangerous slope of compromise? Get real with yourself and kill your selfishness before you and others get destroyed.

5. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES / PROBLEM PASSAGES

Abram being the oldest had first rights to the land of his choice, however in true act of humility, and wanting to resolve conflict he put his desires and trusted that God would honor him. Lot without giving much thought reacted to what was pleasing to the eyes, and made the choice despite it's close proximity to the most sinful cities of those days Sodom.

SOUL WINNER, SO WHAT-

Think for 30 sec of a conflict you have with someone, now ask yourself, have you done everything possible to resolve it? Stop just reading about the great examples of humility and meekness and put them into practice. Put your desires aside, be an example, and don't worry about what people will say about you. Remember we should be living to please God and not man.

Have you done all you can do to resolve conflict in your life with that person? If not what's stopping you? Pride? Anger? Disobedience?

Lot like most of us saw what was pleasing to the eyes, which caused him not to see the danger around him which lead to the eventual destruction of his wife, cattle and the city.

SOUL WINNER, SO WHAT-

We've all heard the saying, "everything that looks good to you is not good for you. Prov. 14:12: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" From the very first sin until now man has been deceived by what is pleasing to the eyes. Due to our strong and sometimes



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overpowering desires of our flesh and it's quest for instant gratification, we are blinded to the potential dangers and sometimes deadly consequences. Never underestimate our sinful nature, but also know that when we allow God to take control of our mind, body and soul the battle in most cases is easier. The next time you are enticed by something pleasing to your eyes, stop, think and count the cost.

Is there an area in your life that you are being blinded by your fleshly/worldly desires? If not praise God. Ask God right now to remove it or remove you!

6. Geographical Component

As chapter 13 comes to a close the city of Sodom plays an important role as Lot leaves the plains of Jordan to live nearby (eventually within the gates). It is unknown exactly where Sodom and Gomorrah were located; however, Bible scholars have concluded that they were most likely located in the Valley of Siddim, which is in the southern region of Israel around the Dead Sea.

In-depth Bible Question: In chapter thirteen Lot comes across the lowest point on the earth. Do you know the name of it? (Answer: The Dead Sea)

SOUL WINNER, SO WHAT:

The city or place we inhabit can drastically affect our faith.

