

What's the Message – Lesson Ten

STANDARD OPENING

New Text

ANNCR: 1. Today's study deals with how Abram responded to God's call, as recorded in Genesis, chapters 12 and 13.

Music concludes

NARATR: 2. Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. May the Lord open your hearts in this study to see the response of Abram as a model for us, a guide for our lives today. Amen.

3. In our two previous studies we have taken an initial look at the covenant God made with Abram, and began to see the importance of the concept of selection and separation. Last time we delved further into the intended role of material possessions, particularly the promise of land and descendants. This time we want to look further into how Abram responded to God's call.

4. In our time of a mobile society, many – if not most of us – have experienced being moved about the country by our employer. It is taken for granted that families are typically separated by hundreds and even thousands of miles.

5. But we have telephones, computers connected to the internet, and airplanes to virtually close that gap of distance. Not so in Abram's day. Try as we might, the tribal connection of the society of his time is something we cannot fully comprehend. For him to cut himself off completely from his family and background entailed a difficult decision on the part of Abram.

6. God was asking him to do something completely out of the ordinary. It would be too much to ask of most men. But Abram was not an ordinary man. That's why God had selected him. God could see into his heart, and knew that this was a man through whom He could work His divine will.

7. But, as we read in Genesis, chapter 12, verse 4, in spite of the fact that he was already 75 years old . . . *Abram went, as the Lord had told him.* God had spoken. So what did this old man do? He got up, and went. He acted.

8. Talk about putting your trust in God. That was an act of faith in the highest order. He took his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot . . . all their possessions . . . and they departed Haran in obedience to God's call.

9. When he arrived in the land of God's promise, he found that it was occupied by the Canaanites . . . an idolatrous people. That meant there were no churches in the local community for him to drop in and visit. So what did he do then? Verses 7 and 8 tell us . . . *there he built an altar to the Lord*. Lest the significance of that escape you, think of it this way . . . at age 75 he built his own churches.

10. Next time you are tempted not to bother looking for a church during your travels, think what Abram faced, and let him be your example.

11. As we read through the rest of chapters 12 and 13 we learn that after a while both he and Lot had accumulated very large herds of cattle. Beginning in verse 6 of chapter 13, it tells us *the land could not support both of them dwelling together for their possessions were so great . . . and there was strife between the herdsmen*.

12. Now, although Abram lived almost four thousand years ago, here is a situation we can relate to. Here was the potential for some strife within the family. Sound familiar? So what was Abram's plan to resolve it? He told Lot to take his choice of where he wanted to live. Beginning in verse 10, we read . . .

13. *And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw that the Jordan valley was well watered everywhere . . . so Lot chose for himself all the Jordan valley; thus they separated from each other.*

14. *And the chapter ends with the note that Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the Lord.*

15. Those are the facts of the story that we want to consider today. But, Teacher, what is the message we should draw from this?

TEACHR: 16. First, one of the key points of God's covenant with Abram – a point we set forth in our previous studies – was that God's command established a duty for mankind . . . a duty to obey. Obedience requires action on our part. So what did Abram do? He acted . . . just as the Lord had told him to do. No excuses. No complaints. Just simple obedience.

17. Second; although I may be in a place that knows not the Lord, I will make my worship of Him plainly visible to all who see me. I will speak with my actions as well as my tongue.

18. Third; my concern will be for my fellow man. See the contrast here with the selfish nephew. Lot looked out for Lot. He took the choicest, best-watered land, leaving the scrubby hill country for his uncle. But Abram thought of others first, and put his trust in God.

Music up, then fade behind . . .

NARATR: 19. We shall see more of this faith of Abram next time.

STANDARD CLOSE

Study Aids

Discussion Questions and Suggested Readings for “What’s the Message?” Lessons

Lesson Ten

Questions:

What does Abram’s response to God’s call and covenant tell you about the character of the man?

Contrast what you have determined about Abram with the character of Lot. What does the fact that Lot moved into the wicked city of Sodom tell you about his regard for God’s covenant and call to obedience?

How about your own level of obedience? Does it measure up to the level of Abram, or that of Lot?

Suggested reading for further study:

Everyday Life in Bible Times, published by the National Geographic Society. This book contains many pictures and illustrations of the people and lands mentioned in the Bible, and devotes a lengthy section to “The World of Abraham” giving the reader a visual comprehension of the man and his times.