

Journeys and choices...

Genesis 11: 27 – 13: 18

There's a secret that ties together the Old and the New Testaments and makes the study of the Old Testament a delight. The Old Testament is designed to be a picture book, illustrating the spiritual truths presented in the New Testament. It is not presumptuous to view the Old Testament in this way; ample evidence is found in the New Testament to indicate that God planned the structure of his book in this manner. Paul's letter to the Galatians, as well as Jesus' own use of these stories, show clearly that the characters in the stories were regarded as 'types', depicting by accurate analogy the course of intended spiritual development. Perhaps the most helpful of these Old Testament portraits is the record of Abraham's life. Abraham is clearly the pattern man of faith. Often in the New Testament he is held up as an example of how God works in the life of a man to fulfil his promises of grace. Abraham is first introduced in the closing verses of Genesis 11. His name was originally Abram, and it was not until much later that it was changed to Abraham. The Spirit of God passes over his early life in Ur with but the briefest notice, and begins the record with his encounter with God...

The call of Abram (Genesis 11: 27 – 12: 9)

- The call of Abram is described in v 1 – 3 of Chapter 12. Note that Abram travelled to Canaan, but not immediately. Abram and his family set out from Ur (Southern Iraq) to go to Canaan (Israel), but they settled in Haran (Northern Iraq) for several years until his father Terah died (Chapter 11 v 31, 32). Why do you think Abram stayed in Haran? Were those years wasted?
- What had God commanded Abram to do? How did Abram's faith express itself? See Hebrews 13 v 8 – 10.
- What far-reaching promises did God make to Abram? What is their significance? Do you think that almost 4,000 years later those promises have been fulfilled?
- What is the significance of the 'altar' (v 7, 8) and the 'tent' (v 8)? See Hebrews 13 v 8 – 10.

Abram in Egypt (Genesis 12: 10 - 20)

- Why did Abram go to Egypt? Did God call him to go there? In what respects did Abram's faith fail, under the tests of famine and fear?
- What were the disastrous consequences – for Abram, for Sarai, for others?

Abram and Lot separate (Genesis 13: 1 - 18)

Lot 'was moving about with Abram' (v 5). Lot was a follower, not a leader, a 'second-hand' believer...

- Why did Abram suggest that he and Lot should separate? Why did Abram give Lot first choice?
- What motivated Lot in his choice? How had the 'Egypt experience' influenced him? What did Lot see? What did he *not* see? Put yourself in Lot's place – what choice would you have made?
- What did Abram lose by letting Lot choose first? What did he gain? What's the lesson for us?