

Bible Basics Conference 2012: “Genesis 1-12”

Part 13

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[00:00:01] God Calls Abram, Session 12, Genesis 12, 1 to 8. I trust that you have read the verses. If not, keep the passage open and you can glance at them and it may well be, and indeed I hope it will be, that in your own time you will study it in more detail. Just a word of prayer before we begin. Blessed God, we acknowledge once more our dependence on thyself and as we turn now to the scriptures once again we would say with the psalmist, open thou mine eyes that we might behold wondrous things out of thy law. In the name and for the glory of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

The call of Abram out of his country and family. God's purpose to bless. God always calls out those [00:01:04] he wants to bless. This involves separation. Go out. That's the main outline that I was given to cover in these eight verses. Here's the call the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house onto a land that I will show thee. So what can we say about the call of Abram? Here we are. First of all it is a scriptural expression, Hebrews 11 verse 8, by faith Abram when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive [00:02:02] an inheritance obey. When he was called we have here a completely new departure in the ways of God. And I say that because Genesis is the book of beginnings and actually in this section from which we have read we have a new beginning. In chapter 11 and verse 27 you have these words, these are the generations of Terah. And when you read that expression these are the generations of, it indicates a new section in the book of Genesis. For instance in chapter 10 verse 1, the generations of the sons of Noah. In 11 verse 10 the generations of Shem and here the generations [00:03:09] of Terah. And Rusty yesterday he read the first one, the generations of the heavens and the earth or the history of the heaven and the earth. And if you have the new translation by Mr. Darby, along with others incidentally involved in the translation, it's already been indicated that the footnotes in this version are very useful. In French or English or German but probably in English we get the benefit of the other versions since it was the last to be completed. If you don't have the new translation I'm sure Nick would be delighted to sell you one. If you wish to have a free copy of one in a cheaper binding speak to me it may be possible to arrange it. But just to [00:04:07] give you an instance in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 4 all these phrases are listed, all these sections in the book of Genesis which are generations of the heaven and earth, of Adam, of Noah, of the sons of Noah, of Shem, of Terah, of Ishmael, of Isaac, of Esau and of Jacob. So these are the generations of Terah.

It's a new beginning, it's a new start because it's a new section of the book of Genesis. But it's also new in another way in that it's in contrast with what before in chapter 10 and 11. Because there we've had man's world and we've had a man's doings and man's self aggrandizement. Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord, the tower of Babel. Let us make [00:05:02] us a name for ourselves in a tower that reaches to heaven. We can manage very well without God, thank you very much. Man's unity, one language, all these features which God had to bring judgment upon. But when we get to chapter 12 God as it were says be that as it may. So that's man's world go on. I'll call someone to myself. I'll bless him in view of another world and I'll have him walk in separation. And that very important principle did not just apply to Abram. It carries right through even to this present day. I think you'll agree with me that Abram or Abraham has a [00:06:05] very important place in Scripture. Not alone in the book of Genesis but in many subsequent books, both of the Old Testament and the New Testament. He was a friend of God. And we also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abram. Romans 4 12. Who is the father of us all? Verse 16.

And in Galatians 3 verse 9. They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abram. So what we have here in this chapter is important for us today. It's a new thing. The first instance in Scripture of the call of Abram. It's the invariable starting point with God from that day to this. The [00:07:04] call of God is no more secret but evident to all. God may have taken up others and in that sense called them but it is now brought out as a principle of public dealing and those whom God has called as indeed we've heard are distinguished from others. It's no more secret and he would now make the call distinct and plain. I want to give some Scripture support that this continues to apply and is true of us today in regard to Israel and in regard to Christians. Hosea 11 verse 1. When Israel was a child then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt. The children of [00:08:05] Israel the nation was called out. Christians well there are numerous passages but here I've chosen Romans and 2nd Timothy Romans 1 verse 6 and 7. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ. And then we are called saints called to be saints or really the meaning of it is that we are today we are saints by divine calling. And those who were present on the previous Saturday before yesterday will know if you were here in the afternoon that I attempted to look at 2nd Timothy 1 9 where it says God has saved us and called us with an holy calling. The principle [00:09:05] of God's call was introduced with Abram and it runs right through with the nation of Israel and with believers. And if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we have received that call. And if you this afternoon evening have not received that call where are you in regard to God? The call of Abram. I've two questions. How does God call us and why? Why particularly did God [00:10:05] call Abram? The first question I'm going to attempt to answer. The second question I'm going to leave with you and I'm hoping that some will give me the answer or at least seek to give me the answer. How does God's call reach us? I would suggest it does so externally, it does so internally, and it does so effectively. Externally, internally, and effectively. Externally by the Word of God.

We had this before us on the previous day, I think in connection with the new birth where [00:11:03] we're born of water. That's the Word of God, that's external, that comes to us. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. But it comes internally by the work of the Holy Spirit. We're born of water and of the Spirit. And where those two elements are combined, that call is effective. It is less effectual, meaning that it produces the desired result, meaning that it has an effect in us, meaning that it is the genuine article, that it is the truth. Yes, we need to hear the Word of God, but you know, many hear the Word of God and where there is not that work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, there's no permanent result for God. So the call reaches us externally, [00:12:07] internally, and where those elements are combined, combined, combined, it reaches us effectively. This next question, why did God call Abram, is more difficult. Put another way, why did God pass the others by? Why was

Abram the one who God picked up on, picked out, used, that it was Abram that became the father of the faithful? Not Terah, not his father, not Nahor, not his brother, not any of those other ones that dwelt beyond the river, because he was no different, [00:13:06] no better, he was an idolater like the others. In Joshua 24, he says your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river, beyond the Euphrates. Terah, Abram's father and the father of Nahor, they served other gods and I took your father Abram. Now, that's the question. It's a profound question. It's a question I leave with you. Those are the two questions I had in mind. How does the call reach us and why did God call Abram? Or put another way, why are we in this room this afternoon listening to the Word of God and not others? Or as the hymn writer expressed it, why was I made to [00:14:03] hear his voice and enter while there's room? One thousand sealed their wretched choice and rather starve than come. That's the call. But you know, when we think of the call, we think of what God calls us to. It's simplifying it somewhat. There's what we're saved from. We're saved from, we flee from the wrath to come. But there's that which we're called to. And when God called Abram, he had a purpose to bless. And when God calls us, he has a purpose in view to do us good in our latter end.

See here, in the following verses, I'll make of thee a great nation. I will bless thee and make thy name great. Thou shalt be a blessing. I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that [00:15:01] curses thee. And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. There are three great thoughts in the Old Testament. Blessing, dwelling, and ruling. Blessing in connection with Abraham.

Dwelling in connection with Moses. Ruling in connection with David. God rules that he may dwell and he dwells that he may bless. Now, in the order in which we have these things, chronologically, the blessing comes first. The dwelling comes out in connection with Moses, as we saw. Ruling in connection with David and indeed with Solomon. The interesting thing about [00:16:02] dwelling is that God didn't dwell with Adam innocent. He didn't dwell with anyone in the book of Genesis. Michael, in the first day, in the second session, he referred to Exodus as the book of redemption. It's only after the blood of the Passover lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts and the lintel and they were delivered through the Red Sea that God came to dwell in the midst of his people. Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. It's only after that we believe in the finished work of Christ that we're sealed with the Holy Spirit. It's only after Christ accomplished his work on the cross of Calvary and went back into heaven that the Holy Spirit was sent down on the day of Pentecost. God's dwelling with his people supposes redemption. But isn't it wonderful, although the order is somewhat different in the Old Testament, that the thought that God always had in view was blessing? He blessed the living creatures. He blessed man and he blessed [00:17:08] the heaven and the earth and he blessed the seventh day and he blessed Noah, but preeminently and particularly the thought of blessing comes out in connection with Abraham. It's too great a subject to develop in the limited time that's at my disposal, but it carries right through to eternity, to the new heaven and the new earth, because in Revelation chapter 21 we read about the throne. He that sat upon the throne, that's God ruling. We read, and we had it from the previous speaker, that the tabernacle of God is with men. The dwelling place of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God. That's God dwelling. And what's the blessing? God says that there'll be no more curse. He says that [00:18:10] he himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain for the former things are passed away. What a wonderful prospect for the people of God in this blessing. And even now in the assembly these things are known. Because the gospel, you know, it leads on to the truth of the kingdom. The kingdom establishes the authority of God. And then when we have God's authority established, we come into the enjoyment of God dwelling with his people. And God would bless us. He blesses us with the blessings of the new covenant and with eternal life.

There God commanded the blessing, even life [00:19:05] evermore the blessing. What can we say about it? We're blessed with faithful Abraham. Now the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. What was the blessing of Abraham? I believe it was justification in the context of Galatians 3. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. And we are justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have brought into right relations with God. And then there are promises made. But the important thing in verse 16, and it all has to do with singular or plural, whether the word is in the singular or the plural, the promises were not to seeds as of many, but as one and to thy seed. [00:20:02] Which is Christ. You know, looking up that verse in its context that Paul is quoting in Galatians from the book of Genesis to see whether it is translated in the singular or in the plural in an English modern Bible translation is a very good gauge of accuracy of translation. Blessing through Abraham, blessing of justification, blessing, our brother referred to the blessing that will extend to the earth, the position of the land, the sand is a descendants as the sand upon the seashore or on the heavenly side of the stars in heaven. We can't, we've talked about the call of Abraham. We haven't time to explore the blessing, but you know, in the Psalm, God says of Christ, thou hast made him to be blessings forevermore. The blessings are in Christ. We're [00:21:02] blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Go home, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. Of course, this involves separation. Get thee out. And Abraham went out. He departed as the Lord had spoken unto him. There's scripture support for separation. And again, in regard to Israel, the people shall dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations. That was spoken about. I've quoted first Peter one, two, in regard to Christians, because we are set apart or elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the father. But the clause I want to pick out here is through [00:22:03] sanctification of the spirit, through the setting apart of the Holy Spirit, and brought under the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And in Acts 15 verse 14, when James was explaining what God was doing, he says, Simeon, Peter, Simon Peter has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. The call of God involves blessing, but it also involves separation unto God. And indeed, the previous speaker gave us some little lesson in languages, not just modern languages, but ancient languages, because he had up on the screen the word Ecclesia, transliterated into our Roman alphabet. And this word for church, Ecclesia, means a called out company. So we are a called out people. Now we know in regard to [00:23:03] Abram, it was a very literal thing, wasn't it? Because he had to get out from his country and from his kindred, from his associates, and from his father's house. It came very close. It was a, shall we say, a physical and a geographical separation. Our sanctification or separation is a spiritual thing. It's a setting apart of the Holy Spirit. But the point with Abram was, God had to be everything in his life and God had to have that first place. In the previous chapter, with man's world, man was, man was everything. And God was saying to Abraham, I must be everything to you. Your shield and your exceeding great reward. Even the one who can raise your offspring, your only begotten child from the dead. What faith in God. But no, the challenge comes to [00:24:06] us today in a spiritual way. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Do we put God's things first in our life? And a very challenging verse about discipleship. And look, if any man, we know that means if anyone come to me, what's this? And hate not his father, mother, wife, children, brother and sisters, even his own life also. What does it mean here to hate? Because this goes against natural relations, does it not? What it is saying is that we must love God more than ourself or our father, our mother, our grandfather, our grandmother, our wife or children. That God's will must be paramount in our life. That's what's involved in the call of God. That's what was seen [00:25:10] in a very visible material way in the life of Abraham. And this is what should be seen, beloved, in our lives. Separation. We are divinely separated onto God positionally. How is it in our practical lives? And I could name a lot of things which I haven't time to name. Things which it would have been unheard of even for Christians to think about in a former day, which seemed to be

permitted in this degenerate age in which we're found. Are we characterized by separation onto God? Do people see in our lives that we're different? Would they ask us for the reason for the hope that we have in us? There's a challenge in what we're learning today for [00:26:04] ourselves. So we've had God's call to Abraham, mostly verses 1 to 3. I hope you'll spare me a few more minutes just to speak about Abraham's consequent walk with God in verses 4 to 8. Abraham's walk with God. We know he had the tent and the altar, because there's another altar, by the way, spelt differently. With all the confusion of languages and with all the different nationalities present here today, altar, A-L-T-E-R, means we have to change our behavior. That's what I was speaking about in regard to separation. Alter our lifestyle, A-L-T-E-R. But here Abraham had altar. That's the thought of sacrifice. Not the first in Genesis. We had that in connection with Noah. But in this passage, verses 4 to 8, we have twice again the mention of [00:27:09] the altar. But here's another thing. The Lord appeared unto him, and he called on the name of the Lord. And then there's another point. This is my fifth one. He had enemies. Looking at these things briefly, a tent is a temporary dwelling place. We daily pitch our moving tent a day's march nearer home. We're pilgrims and we're strangers. Pilgrims means we're on a journey. Looked at the other way, strangers mean we don't belong here. Pilgrims, we belong somewhere else. We're not of the world, which fadeth away. We're in the world. We're not of the world. It's not for us to be seeking our bliss and building our hopes in a region like us. It's [00:28:09] the altar. Approach to God. Worship. Thanksgiving. When we get to chapter 15, Abraham fell on his face before Jehovah. That was the true expression of worship. The family altar, very prevalent in the book of Genesis. Individual worship. Collective worship.

Some of us have had the privilege in different localities to come together around the Lord Jesus to worship the Father and the Son. But listen, this central one is so important. The Lord appeared unto him. What do we know of personal experiences with God? Of life-changing [00:29:07] experience? Of divine visitation? I'm not talking about anything emotional or mystical or sentimental.

I'm talking about experiences which are firmly grounded on the Word of God. But there needs to be some sense of the reality of personal and direct dealings with God. The Lord appeared unto Abraham. There were moments in his life that he could look back on, that Moses or whoever wrote the book of Genesis could record. When Abraham was in the immediate presence of God, when he was bowed before him, when God spoke to him. Has God spoken to you? In anything that was said [00:30:07] yesterday? Or today? Or in your personal devotions? I take it you have personal devotions when you read the Word of God for yourself, when you study the Bible. That's a thing of the past with a lot of people in this busy world. We need to be in the Lord's presence. We need divine visitations. We need to experience God speaking to us. But also he called on the name of the Lord. I'm not going to speak about this because it's too challenging. I just leave the question with you. How is your prayer life? Dear brother, dear sister, how is your prayer life? And then in that scripture in Luke [00:31:10] that we read, you know those that want to be disciples of the Lord Jesus need to take up their cross daily and follow him. The Canaanite was laying in the land. Abraham had enemies. And if we seek to walk with God, we're not going to find a bed of roses. To be forearmed, to be forewarned, is to be prepared. So just to go back to this one here, God's call to Abraham out of the world, God's purpose to bless, God's separation of Abraham unto himself resulted in a consequent walk with God. The five points I've brought before you. May God help us in regard to these things.