

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 11. (Gen 11:31 – 12:20). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>

Overview: In Genesis 1-11, Scripture described the creation story. We saw humanity’s “fall” or separation from the presence and holiness of God, and the relentless growth of evil – all couched against the backdrop of God’s enduring patience and love. As chapter 11 closed, we were introduced to Terah, “*the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran*” (11:27). We watched Terah and his family set out from Ur to go to Caanan, but they stopped midway in their journey and settled in Haran (11:27-32). Scripture seemed to make special note of Sarai (Abram’s wife) being “*barren*” (11:30). Chapters 12 through 25 move us through the story of Abraham. “*Journey*,” which serves as the overarching metaphor for the narrative, in fact, says something significant about the life of faith and our relationship with God. The narrative suggests 2 major features:

- (1) the promise to Abraham of the “land,” (with chapters 12-15) devoted to securing the land; and
- (2) “descendents” or “seed” (with chapters 16-22 devoted to securing descendents).

The *major plot in Genesis*, and perhaps the foundational concept for the rest of God’s storied relationship to His creation is found at the start of chapter 12. Simply stated, the plot describes God intervening in the history of human fallenness as He chooses (“elects”) a man and his family to begin the process of “redeeming” (purchasing back) humanity from its state of relational separation from Him by “faith.” Again, the literary device of “ring composition,” presented below, walks us through some major points.

- (A) An introductory genealogy (11:10-32)
- (B) Abraham migrates from Haran and separates from Nahor ([12:1-3]; 12:4-5)
- (C) Abraham builds altars and is promised land (12:5b-9 [13:14-18])
- (D) Abraham endangers Sarai, his “wife-sister” (12:10-20)
- (E) Abraham makes a border agreement with Lot (13:1-13)
- (F) Foreign kings defeat Sodom; Lot is rescued (14:1-24)
- (G) God confirms His Covenant through sacrifice (15:1-21)
- (H) Hagar is expelled and rescued (16:1-16)
- (G) Abraham confirms the covenant through circumcision (17:1-27)
- (F) God destroys Sodom; Lot is rescued (18:1-19:38)
- (E) Abraham makes a border agreement with Abimelech (21:22-34)
- (D) Abraham endangers Sarah, his “wife-sister” (20:1-18)
- (C) Abraham builds an altar (22:6) and land is secured (22:17b; 23:1-20)
- (B) Abraham sends Eliezer to Haran and reunites with Nahor’s line (24:1-67)
- (A) A concluding genealogy (22:20-24; 25:1-18)

Read 11:27 – 12:20 completely through. Today we read God’s call to Abram. Pay particular attention to God’s instructions, God’s PROMISE, and Abram’s responses. Note apparent hindrances that might stand in the way of fulfillment of the Promises. Interestingly, “Canaanite” is not an ethnic designation; it is a social designation. The land Abram is entering is comprised of numerous ethnic peoples. The term “Canaanite” means “trader, trafficker.” Thus, Canaanites share a common feature – they engage in commerce. NOTE: God is establishing His relationship with man built on God’s Promise and man’s belief or trust in that promise.

- **Re-read 12:1-3.** What does God ask Abram to do (specifically: what is Abram to let go, and where is he to go)? What does God promise Abram? (Be specific in your answers).
- **Re-read 12:4-9.** What is Abram’s response to God’s promise? (Be specific in your answers). What, if anything, do you find significant about Abram’s responses? What picture, if any, does this begin to draw for you of man’s “trust/faith”? Explain.
 - Abram and his entourage apparently traverse most, if not all, the land (north in Shechem; east-west in Bethel-Ai; south in the Negeb). In 12:4-9 and also 11:30, what obstacles appear to stand in the way of Abram receiving God’s promises as he makes his journey?
 - Abram’s journey begins in response to God’s Word and appears to picture a total embrace of God’s Promise. What application (s) do you draw, if any, with regard to your own “trust/faith” journey in God’s service? Discuss.
- **Re-read 12:10-20.** This section provides our first glimpse at the possibility of the promise being jeopardized. Abram departs the “promised land” to go to Egypt. What actions does Abram take? Who is “blessed” and what blessings, if any, result? Now think back to the original promise in 12:1-3. Do you think God is actively working to keep the promise in force during the Egypt sojourn? If so, in what way? Discuss.