

Commentary on Genesis 12:1-9

By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, December 4, 2011**, is from **Genesis 12:1-9**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse by verse [International Bible Lesson Commentary](#) below. The **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the [Bible Lesson Forum](#), will aid teachers in class preparation and in conducting class discussion. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive [International Bible Lessons Commentary Index](#). The weekly [International Bible Lesson](#) is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at <http://InternationalBibleLessons.org> and in [The Oklahoman](#) newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Genesis 12:1-9

(Genesis 12:1) Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

God did not change Abram’s name to Abraham until Genesis 17:5. Just as we leave the world behind to follow Jesus Christ in the Kingdom He promised, Abram had to leave his known world behind to go where God would lead him. God taught him how to totally trust in Him for all of his needs and future. God also taught him to obey Him always. Abram went to a better land, just as our going to heaven is going to the better place that Jesus has prepared for His followers. The new world that God has promised will be a better place too.

(Genesis 12:2) I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

God gave Abram good reasons to obey Him by telling him what He would do when Abram left his old world behind. Abram did not know how long he would need to wait for God’s promises to be fulfilled or how God would keep them. Abram simply trusted God and obeyed. Abram’s faith, though not as mature as it would become, tells us something about Abram’s character when God called him.

(Genesis 12:3) I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Abram would bless others by his faith and obedience. He blessed his nephew, Lot, by giving him land and later rescuing him from captivity. He blessed the world through many of his descendants, especially Jesus the Messiah. God would bless him, and though we do not learn if any cursed or abused Abram directly, his

descendants suffered at the hands of evil people, and God has punished many of those who cursed them. Some especially cursed Jesus, and some still do so.

(Genesis 12:4) So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

We are never too old to begin obeying God, though we might have served God better in the strength of our youth. We do not know how much Abram knew about God or how long he obeyed God before he was seventy-five years old. Abram had to wait twenty-five years for the birth of the son God promised (Isaac), and he lived for one hundred and seventy-five years (see Genesis 21:5 and Genesis 25:7). We do not know how long we will need to wait for God to keep some of His promises to us and others.

(Genesis 12:5) Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan,

God did not change Sarai's name to Sarah until Genesis 17:15. Since they had no children, their brother's son could be a great help in their moving and caring for their livestock. Lot's father, Haran, had died in Ur of the Chaldeans (which was SE of Babylon). Though Abram's father, Terah, had left for the land of Canaan, he stopped and settled his family in Haran (Genesis 11:31). The "persons" may have been servants, because shepherds would need servants to help them if they had a large flock of sheep. They did not need to abandon all of the good things that God had already given them when God called them to move to the land of Canaan.

(Genesis 12:6) Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

Abram left Haran, which was slightly NE of Syria and traveled to Shechem, which was NE of Jerusalem and NW of the Dead Sea. In Moses' day, the city was named Shechem and Moses used the name in writing this verse. Moreh was probably the name of the man who owned the land: the name can mean "teacher." It may have been a place of rest and worship for Canaanites and other travelers.

(Genesis 12:7) Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

All of his life, Abram traveled in tents. The only things of permanence that he built were altars to the LORD. He never built a home; just as the LORD traveled with His people in tent or tabernacle until Solomon built a temple. The land was given by God to Abram's offspring. The only land Abram ever owned was a burial

cave and surrounding field that he bought for his wife and himself (see Genesis 23:1-20). Abram lived in the Promised Land, but only owned this cave and field.

(Genesis 12:8) From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD.

It seems that wherever Abram went in the Promised Land, he built an altar to worship the true God instead of the false gods of the Canaanites. Later, when he went into Egypt because of a famine in the land of Canaan, as far as we know he did not build an altar (perhaps fear of the Egyptians overcame his faith in God). The name Bethel means “House of God,” which was about ten miles north of Jerusalem. Ai was destroyed by Joshua after an initial defeat when the Hebrews entered the Promised Land (see Joshua 7-8).

(Genesis 12:9) And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

Abram continued to travel south toward Egypt as he sought green pastures and water for his flocks. He went by stages as his flocks grazed. In the Book of Genesis, we also learn about the spiritual stages of faith and failure that Abram experienced as he grew in faith on his way to spiritual maturity.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Have you ever had to move away from your homeland or father’s home? How secure did you feel? How did your faith in God influence your move?
2. Today, when you read about events that can create fear and uncertainty, how does your faith in God help you?
3. What are some of the things Abram did to strengthen his faith in God? What are some of the things you can do to strengthen your faith in God?
4. Abram moved a lot of times in the Promised Land. How can moving often have an effect on people?
5. Have you ever thought that God wanted you to move? What did you do? What was the result of what you did?

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