

The Call to Go Being the Blessing Genesis 12:1-9 Robin Lewis

NOTE: Robin's handouts (including the map and the readings) can be downloaded from the website at:

<https://allsaintsweston.churchinsight.com/Publisher/Article.aspx?preview=true&ID=0>

Now, let me just tell you the route that we are going to take through this talk this morning. First of all, we are going to look at Abraham's call. And I did say *Abraham* deliberately, because as you know, he was called Abram to start off with. And later on he changed his name. His name was changed, by God, to Abraham. So, I shall use them sort of interchangeably.

We will look at –

- 1) his call
- 2) the route that he took
- 3) the blessing that he received
- 4) the relevance to us

1) The Call

First of all there is a map that will show Abraham's route.



And then there are set readings:

(<https://allsaintsweston.churchinsight.com/Publisher/Article.aspx?preview=true&ID=0>).

I want to go back to Genesis chapter 11 where you have Abraham's father, and there we see that Abraham's father was called Terah. I do not quite know how to pronounce it but perhaps we will find out.

And Terah became the father of Abram. And then, what happened? Verse 31:

Genesis 11:31

“³¹Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Harran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan.”

Now, jump a little down to chapter 12:1 –

Genesis 12:1

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.’”

So, Abraham's father was called Terah. His close relatives are listed in chapter 11. Terah took Abram and Terah's grandson and Sarai, Abram's wife, and they set out.

Note that God called Abram. He called him to leave his home. Had Terah heard God's call too? Had Abram told him? Or did Terah hear it? We do not know. But they left Ur.

Well now, why? What was it about Ur that he had to leave? Well, I took the liberty of looking up a few historical facts about Ur. The traditional location of Ur is towards the Persian Gulf. But whatever it was or wherever it was, it was a pretty corrupt place. It was high society. The archaeologists tell us there was a very sophisticated civilisation there. As a result, Abram was probably pretty well educated, but it was corrupt. It was corrupt in all sorts of ways and apparently it was at least as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah (which will be talked about in a much later sermon).

God wanted Abram to go to a new land, to make a great nation of Abram and he did not want them corrupted. So, he moved them out away from the influences. And as you know today only too well, it is so easy to be insidiously corrupted by what we see and we hear. God called them. We do not know how he called them, but Abram and his dad listened.

2) The Route

So, we have the call. And then they set out. And that is where we turn to the map and we look at the route.



They set out. If you are going to Canaan from Ur, why go northwest and then come southwest? Well, the answer to that is where the Abraham's wanderings were. There is a great big desert, and crossing that was pretty jolly hard work. So, what did you do? You followed the rivers. There were crops. You could graze your animals if you took animals. There were settlements. You could trundle along. And off they went.

And if you look at the map, they went in stages. Up the Euphrates, northwest, and they got to Haran. Eventually they came down through Damascus, down to Shechem, down to Jerusalem. He was all around. It went in stages. They did not get there all in one go. There would be plenty of time for talk and consideration and speculation. But they followed the trade routes, whether they came from the northern location or the southeastern location. Up they went. The fastest you could go was presumably camelback. Not, I understand, one of the most comfy ways of travelling.

And they came to Harran. Do not worry too much about the spelling of Harran. Sometimes it is spelt with two Rs, sometimes it is spelt with one R. Do not worry too much about the pronunciation either. Of course, originally it would not even have been written down in Roman script such as we have.

They stopped at Harran. Why? Was it Terah's health? Was it the climate? Was it fear? Whatever it was, Abram clearly had respect for his father. "Honour your father and mother" - the fifth commandment.

Terah died. Well, many of us here will have experienced the loss of a parent. And then Abram returned to his call - "Go to the land I will show you."

Genesis 12:4

"4Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran."

Abram was 75 years old when he left Harran. Now, I am 75. Nothing to be achieved. Plenty of people here, I suspect, would be able to say, 75, just wait a bit. If we read on in Genesis 25:7, Abram was 175 when he finally died. Well, in the very unlikely event that I achieve Abram's age, I can look forward to digging the allotment for a good few more seasons.

But notice also that he had grown rich in Harran:

Genesis 12:4

"5He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated."

And if we read on in Genesis 14:4, Abram was able to call up a private army of 318 trained warriors from his own household when he went off to rescue Lot. So going down from Harran to Canaan was a pretty big body.

And as we have already alluded, he went in stages:

Genesis 12:6

“6 Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem.”

And then God appeared to him there, and God gave him the land.

Genesis 12:7

“7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’”

It is no wonder he built an altar.

And then he moved on:

Genesis 12:8

“8 From there he went on towards the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent.”

And there he built an altar again. He went in stages. He moved on. He continued towards the Negev.

A little aside about altars - now, we have always rather thought of altars as places of worship and sacrifice and that sort of thing. But these altars were rather more than that:

- They symbolised communion with God.
- They commemorated notable encounters.
- They remained there for years and years and years as continual reminders of God's protection and his promises.
- They were places of thanksgiving.

Have you heard this phrase: "At all times and in all places give thanks unto God." My daughter, when she heard me practising this, said to write in there, "cultivate an attitude of gratitude." - Worth doing.

3) Blessing

God's covenant to Abram.

Genesis 12:2-3

"² 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'"

And of course, we have always understood that the Messiah, God's chosen one, would come from the Jews. And that is why I have printed out the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah. One is from Matthew's Gospel, and one is from Luke's Gospel.

Now Matthew's genealogy starts with Abraham, going back to Abraham, showing that Jesus is related to all the Jews. Follow the names recorded. Each person clearly important to God. He named all these people in the Bible. I wonder how many of us can name our grandparents or great-grandparents. I certainly cannot. We are going to be forgotten in a couple of generations. These guys are in the Bible for all time.

And if you look down Abraham's seed, you will find that he came, the tribe of Judah, born of David's line.

Now Luke's genealogy reverses it, and it takes us all the way back to Adam: "Son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God."

It shows that **Jesus is related to all of us.**

So, we have seen, albeit briefly, Abram's call, his route, his blessing. And then you say to yourself, "well, okay, there we are, terribly interesting. How does that help me today here in ASW on Rogation Day?:"

What about the calling? - Do you know what God wants you to do now, today, where you are living here in Bath? Are you listening to God's Holy Spirit? Are we listening to God's Holy Spirit? If you are not sure what you should be doing, well, pray about it. Pray about it.

You see, it is terribly easy, as we know, to think that we are of little or no use and have not really got a purpose. You know, many of us here have completed our families. We have completed our working lives. We can easily feel of little value to society. God does not think like that.

"Pray everywhere in all situations", says Paul in Ephesians 6:18.

You do not have to do something huge. We can find our calling just by praying about it.

You do not have to be like Abram. You do not have to up sticks with your family aged 75. That is a call.

What about your route? Well, many of us, like Abram, have progressed along in stages. You can look back maybe and see how God has had his hand on you. Abram left when he was 75. I am humbled to say I have recently found my calling. And the route, the journeyings, the change, the experiences I have been through, they are all now supporting what I believe God wants me to do. That is my route.

Notice too that as Abram journeyed through Canaan, he did not forget to worship. He built the altars. We must not forget corporate worship. We must not give up meeting together.

Hebrews 10:24-25

“²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Get the support of fellowship. Grab it. And if age or infirmity strikes, well, call for assistance. You know, that is quite hard for us Brits. “British reserve”, you know. “I must stand on my own feet/I must do it all myself.” Ask for assistance.

And the blessing. Abram was promised that God would make from him a great nation, the Jews. And through them, all the nations in the world would be blessed. **Jesus was born of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, in David's line, the son of Adam. He was a human like us, but he was also God incarnate. And he lived, and he died on the cross, paying the penalty of our sins. And he rose again. That all of us, all who trust him, put their lives into his hands, seek forgiveness for their sins, all of us can know now, today, the assurance of his presence. That is an incredible blessing.**

And how about this, for a blessing for all people.

Call. A route. A blessing.

On that last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man, Saviour of the world, stood in the temple at Jerusalem and cried in a loud voice:

John 10:37-38

“³⁷ Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

Perhaps that is a message for someone here today, right now.

God's call. Your route. Your blessing from him.

Amen.



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