

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 31st July 2022 10 am

God's call to Abram

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture

Hymn MP 237 Holy Holy Holy

Scripture Isaiah 55 (page 742)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk

Chorus MP 591 Seek the Lord all ye people

Notices Members Mtg, Fellowship Lunch, SFOI, Quinton

Prayer time

Reading Genesis 12:1-7 (page 13)

Acts 7:1-7 (page 1099)

Hymn MP 645 The God of Abraham praise

Sermon The call to holiness

Hymn MP 1358 There is a hope that burns within my heart,

Closing Prayer

Close



Prayer & Exordium

Ana's brother-in-law was buried yesterday. He was in so much debt and trouble he took poison, three weeks later he died in hospital. He was an unfaithful man, he treated his family harshly, a drinker, he took drugs to Amsterdam by swallowing them. He had been in and out of church all his life but never heeded the call to turn from his ways. Now he will be called before God for a terrible Judgment.

The last key event we looked at in the Bible was Babel, now as we come to Genesis Chapter 12 it's Abram. Here we have :

1. God's call to Abram to leave behind his old life, **Ge 12:1**.
2. Abram's obedience to this call, **Ge 12:4-5**.
3. The land is promised, **Ge 12:6-9**.

God is calling Abram, it is specific, it is personal. God has spoken to him x2 - and he knows it. This is the LORD, Yahweh, the one true Holy God.

He is told to leave where he is – He is called out of – and he is called into.

In the beginning God and man were one. At first Adam and Eve didn't need that call – until they sinned - and then they did. Then **the Lord God called to the man "where are you"** a separation had taken place and a terrible judgment was about to be handed down. Adam and Eve were banished from the garden and cursed - and so all of us - and all creation cursed to. Death had come.

But now, here God calls: – "come" x2

- Like a disobedient child sent out of the house – the father says "you can come in now".

✚ This call is not the call to judgment – but the call to blessing.

Abram was a long way away – just as you and I naturally are - far from God "Leave where you are and come, I will show you where you have to go."

✚ It is a call from - and a call to - from the world - and to holiness

Today we will see with Abram - how God calls – he obeys – he receives

But let's first see what is going on

God's call to Abram Ge 12:1

Up to this point God has judged the sin of Adam and Eve, warned Cain, set apart Noah for the task building the ark and then afterwards condemned the city of Babel.

Now for the first time the Lord tells an individual to leave and come to him.

“1 **The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.**

The previous passage suggests this was said in Haran. But Stephen in his defence before the Sanhedrin – see Acts 7 - said: "**Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, that is the land of Chaldea, and the city of Ur, before he lived in Haran. 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.'** Acts 7:2,3

Did the Lord speak to him in the Ur of the Chaldees, before he came and dwelt in Haran? as it seems from Ac 7:2 or was it in Haran? *The words are in the past tense the Lord had said, it then goes on to say 4* "**So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, (who died in Haran) God sent him to this land where you are now living.**

It is highly probable that there were two appearances of God to Abram, and that the same words, or very near the same, were spoken to him on both occasions, first in Ur of the Chaldees, and then in Haran.

✚ There may be some ambiguity about exactly when and where he was called – there is certainly no ambiguity about the call itself!

Leave your country, Leave your people, Leave your father's household

God is calling Abram, God has spoken to him, this is the LORD, Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews. Where he is now there are many other gods, there are many idols, the place is full of local deities, but not the true God.

God is calling him - He cannot come to God and stay where he is! So to for anyone - to come to God you must leave all your old life behind.

Physical / spiritual

“so when the **LORD said to Abram, to Leave his country, his people, his father's household** does that mean I should do the same? Literally?

If I am to do what the Lord wants then must I too leave my country, leave the UK, leave my family and home? No. No. Although God does sometimes call his people to go to certain places, this is not what is meant here.

Just so we don't get the wrong end of the stick let us remember that the things in the OT are things of the heart, invisible things acted out physically. Although they are real physical places, (it is not make-believe!) - the meaning is spiritual.

For example: when the people went up to the temple in Jerusalem, the priests went before them and opened up the way to God through the altar of sacrifice. Today we come to God through Jesus and the cross. What they did then visibly was to make clear the meaning to us now.

Now we understand what Jesus did in his perfect sacrifice, clearing away sin to enable the sinner to come before this Holy God. It also shows repentance, for sin cannot be forgiven where there is no desire to turn from it – Once forgiven it opens the way to God. No-one can come to God any other way. To come before God without cleansing - is to die. His Holiness demands it.

Abram's call is ultimately a call to holiness – To do so Abram must leave his country and home. He must leave behind him his old life, his old ways, his old gods, his old priorities, his old loves, now he is to follow God's call, he to have a new master and the sign of this is that he leaves.

Everything suggests he is settled where he was, with his own people in his own household, and as far as we can tell he was doing well and happy.

✚ Is that you? Settled, comfortable, not expecting change?

Getting on in years, he had a wife, many servants and plenty of possessions and property.

But as I said his country was idolatrous, his family and father's house were a constant temptation to him, he could not continue and stay where he was.

Now he is to 'leave'. The word 'leave' sounds weak doesn't it! Some translations say 'depart', some say 'Go', the AV says 'get thee out' x2 *Get thee out of thy country* There's power in this imperative. 'Leave now'!

■ If there was a fire in the church I would not come in, sit down and wait for a pause in the conversation and then gently say "would you mind, - at your convenience - to head out", No I would shout in the most urgent manner "get out, you must leave straight away"

God is calling Abram to 'Get out'.

In calling Abram God is separating him out, to - as he says later "**Walk before me and be blameless**" x2 Gen 17:1

By being separated I don't mean the 70's phrase *please stop the world I want to get off*, who hasn't thought that! No to be blameless before this Holy God means cut the world out of my heart, to sever my ties to it.

James said "**Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of**

God. 4:4. **You adulterous people.** says James, to claim to walk with God and still be friends with the world is like committing adultery

It is like marrying your husband or wife and yet still remaining 'friends' with that old flame. "We are only 'friends'" Forget it, kill it off!

Paul said **the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.** In other words, he was **dead to the world.** Gal 6:14 *dead to it.* Lot's wife – remember her? - she looked back - Paul, Abram and anyone who turns to Jesus must never look back. Jesus said: "**No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.**" Luke 9:62

As God called Abram – so God in Christ is calling you x2

"**Come, follow me,**" Jesus said then - and he says to you and I now "**Come, follow me**"

As God said then to Abram: **Walk before me and be blameless,** so now he says **Be holy, because I am holy.**" 1 Peter 1:16 Yes above all God is a Holy God.. **just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do** 1 Peter 1:15

Abraham was called. He did not choose God. He was apparently perfectly satisfied being where he was in the Mesopotamian river valley in a pagan culture. But God called him and sent him on his way to Palestine.

Have you heeded that call? Those that respond the Lord **chose ... to be holy and blameless in his sight.** Eph 1:4. Christians the Apostle Paul says are **those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy,** 1 Cor 1:2 that means you here this morning. **The call is to separateness, to holiness.** x2

How about you? Have you responded to His call to you? Do not think that coming to meet here once a week will change anything before God. The question is do you still adopt the world's ways? Or have you left them?

✚ **No-one who professes Christ can continue to live as the world does.**

Do you recognise the world's slogans: "look after yourself, be true to yourself you, move with the times, be inclusive, remove all stigmas"

In other words, so dull your conscience that it becomes completely insensitive to sin.

■ It is hard to find a film that does not have sexual immorality or nudity in it. Do you baulk at the lewdness, the foulness of language?

Jeremiah says three times that the people of God had so fallen in with the world's ways they had forgotten how to blush **Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them,"** says the LORD. Jeremiah 6:15, 8:12, 3:3

3a

The world is careless, it loves it's ease and leisure, it loves things, it loves appearances. It loves the lewd and the dirty. No-one who ever professes faith in Christ should look at what the world does and act like the world around.

■ And dress like the world. Al Martin preaching in the 1980's contrasted the modest clothing of the women in the 50's with the women then with their tightfitting clothes and short skirts He said they now wear what then only prostitutes used to wear."

A man or woman who has responded to the call of God should be different in every way, in modest appearance, in heart and in mind.

The world is vain, it is proud, it is self-absorbed, just look at people's WhatsApp status updates, or other the social media, me, me, me.

Do not love the world says the Apostle John 1 John 2:15 - Sin, and where it is found must be given up, that bad company, those idols set up in the hearts, must all be rejected.

Rev 18 speaks of a "**voice from heaven: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins,** Rev 18:4-6, See Isaiah 48:20, 52:11, Zech 2:7

God's call is to His holiness, that is to be separated out for God who is holy.

Like Lot in Sodom we must make all possible haste to get out of the city. It's for your own good. If you leave your sin, and turn to God, you will gain. If you want to come into the Kingdom of God – you have to get out of the world. – or should I say **get the world out of you.**

without holiness no-one will see the Lord. Heb 12:14 You cannot be godly unless you shun evil, "**Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.**" 2 Tim 2:19

✚ **To confess to love God is to want what he wants – to love what he loves and to hate what he hates.**

■ "Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God things, and willing as God wills." John Brown, Nineteenth-century Scottish theologian, quoted in J. Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, p. 51

What is it that you are still clinging to? Or is clinging to you? How often have I heard when I talk to people about setting apart Christ Jesus as Lord "*Oh but my family comes first*". There will be many people in hell because "*My family comes first*" No. Jesus is very clear: "**If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.** Lu 14:26

3b

Did not Christ leave all, suffer greatly and cling to the cross to save you out of the world - and into his Kingdom? **Ronald Ana's brother-in-Law heard this, - again and again he heard this, from my lips and from others many times. But he wouldn't listen, he wouldn't leave it behind.**

✚ “Get thee out”, said the Lord to Abram, - and he did.

Abram - the man of faith - is obedient to this call, Ge 12:4-5.

Abram takes that step of faith and leaves. He has left the place of all his old and fond associations. He had decided to do it - and he does it.

Leave - and go to the land I will show you.

He does not where he is going. He trusts that God knows - and that is enough, that is all I need to know. That is real faith. I don't know – but he does - and he has told me to go, that's enough for me.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. Hebrews 11:8

Abram puts his entire faith in the reasonableness of God. I will head out to an unknown land. “God will show me”

he does - **4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran,** (not Ur of the Chaldeas) he was obviously a very able businessman. **and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.**

Abram obeyed – Have you obeyed His call to you, now?

Have you forsaken all for Christ who died on the cross that the gates of heaven may be opened to you.

Will you now love and serve him who gave his all for you? You won't if you still love what the world loves, it's image, possessions, comfort, self. **For No-one can serve two masters.**

That same call comes to you this morning. Leave the world with all its entertainments and pleasures and **Be Holy because I am Holy.**

The sign that you have - is that you look upon the world with a holy indifference and contempt; it is no longer home for you.

It is full of temptations like the airport as you make your way to the plane there that zigzag walk through the lush, luring shops wafting their enticing fragrances. Close your eyes and make haste through them.

✚ **So we do in the world, dragging out as many as we can on the way, snatching as many as we can on the way.**

We live in rented property, this world is not our home, so have no affection for it, but sit loosely in it, and live above it. Let us follow....

■ **Abraham's steps of faith—He left all for God, left all with God, found all in God and yielded all to God.**

Abram obedient to the call, left and went where he was told to go.

■ **Abram walked the steps of faith that fall on the seeming void, and found the Rock beneath. — J. G. Whittier**

There are those who are in church - but have not left the world. They profess faith, sing the hymns, even take communion but have not left the world. Is that you? you attend, but you do not live as part of the body of Christ – That is because you are not. You are not involved in gospel work, you do not fish for men or women, because you have still to shun the world and its ways.

Why not heed the loving appeal of the Saviour? He calls to your heart. Why love the world so much, it does not love you.

Finally - Abram is welcomed to the land of Canaan, Ge 12:6-7.

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him."

The land is **the promised land**,— it is a picture not of Canaan but of Christ, who is, - He is, - the land flowing with milk and honey. The land is Christ. It is described as the **land of the living** - the place to find life.

✚ **The door – the way to the land is still open for you**

Have you heeded the call? Have you left the old ways for something better by far? If we truly want to follow God we must seek to be otherworldly.

A. W. Tozer reminds us that: Every man must choose his world. If you are to follow Christ then we are choosing the "other world," which is the object of this world's disdain and the subject of mockers. For the true Christian it is our carefully chosen goal and the object of our holiest longing.

And how wonderful it is! THERE IS A HOPE that burns within my heart,
That gives me strength for every passing day;
A glimpse of glory now revealed in meagre part,
Yet drives all doubt away:
I stand in Christ, with sins forgiven;
And Christ in me, the hope of heaven!

My highest calling and my deepest joy, To make His will my home. ___END