

Thought for Sunday 10th January 2021

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Read Genesis 12:1-20 I wonder what 2021 holds for us, especially after 2020 being such a difficult year with the Covid19 coronavirus, and it is not over yet. If we had read the previous chapter we would have read the confirmation of the earlier part of the genealogy of Jesus because verses 10-32 just affirm what we read in Luke 3:34-38, although the Genesis account is a lot more detailed, giving the ages of Abraham's ancestors. Our reading begins with a challenge because; *'The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the people I will show you.'* Now the family had already moved, we see that in the last few verses of the previous chapter verse 31; *'together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.'* It is interesting that even at the end of chapter 11 and verse 30 we read; *'Now Sarai was barren, she had no children.'* By the time we get to chapter 12, Sarai was about 65 years old and nothing was to change in her barrenness for some time, that is until we get to chapter 18, but we will look at that another day. What we **read in 12:2-3** is God's promises to Abram and verse 4 tells us that Abram was obedient to God's calling on his life; *'So Abram left, as the Lord had told him;'* It could be said Abram didn't stick to the letter; *'Leave your country and your people...'* because we know from verse 4 that Lot went with him, Lot was his nephew, Abram also took; *'the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran,'* the only part of his father's household, it could be argued he took, that he took with him was his nephew Lot, his brother Haran's son. This was not a short journey from Haran to the great tree of Moreh at Shechem is a journey of about 500 miles and we are told (v6) *'At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'to your offspring I will give this land.'* Abram still had much travelling to do, that area was the area Abram's offspring would inherit. Abram and his family would have been used to the nomadic style of life, and he knew that when the right time came God would tell him to settle down. Knowing God's will for our lives is not always easy to understand, but being at peace and allowing God to lead us, is all God calls us to do. I have no idea what the Lord has in store for me but as I read Genesis 12:4, I suddenly realised that I am the same age now that Abram was in this passage; *'So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy five years old when he set out from Haran.'* My prayer is that if the Lord has a message for me and a job for me to do, I pray the Lord will appear to me as he did to Abram, verse 6-7; *'Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 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.'* With the promises that the Lord had given to Abram, you would think he would be able to trust God for everything, but as we move into the second half of chapter 12, we see Abram doing things his own way and not trusting God to deal with any obstacles. **Read 12:10-13...** The lovely hymn by John Henry Sammis sums it up; *'When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will, He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.'* Too often we wonder why things aren't going the way we would like them to go, but it is, as the hymn writer says; when we walk with the Lord, in the light of His word, then we see the sorts of blessings that God wants us to receive, then we know the peace that God wants us to have. Abram felt he needed to take control of the situation, God was guiding Abram and his entourage to Egypt because there was a famine and the family needed to be fed. If we role forward a few generations, we see Joseph, with the coat of many colours, being sold off by his brothers but he ends up the head man in

Egypt and in another famine is able to feed his family. So Egypt had the know how to store food in the good times, nothing had changed. Back in chapter 12 Abram is worried for his life and so turns to deceit and tells his wife to say she is his sister. We don't have to be deceitful, God knows what is best for us, 'trust and obey' as the hymn writer says. Chapter 13 begins; 'So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev...' god knew where he wanted Abram to go but Abram needed a bit of nudging and cajoling to get there. I don't doubt we can all see ourselves in Abram but when we do what God wants and hopes we will do, we will be at peace, not only with God but also with ourselves. Jeremiah 29:11 says; 'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' I pray that at the beginning of this New Year 2021, that we can hold onto that hope. 2020 was a different year for every-one, especially with the Covid19 coronavirus. We are told they have a vaccine that will protect us from its effects, that by Easter things should be able to get back to some sort of normality. I guess many of us are missing hugs as much as anything else. Amen

Take us to the river,
Take us there in unity to sing
A song of Your salvation
To win this generation for our King.
A song of Your forgiveness,
For it is with grace that river flows;
Take us to the river in the city of our God.

Take us to Your throne room,
Give us ears to hear the cry of heaven;
For that cry is mercy,
Mercy to the fallen sons of man:
For mercy it has triumphed,
Triumphed over judgement by Your blood;
Take us to the throne room in the city of our God.

*For the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon us:
This is the year of the Lord.
The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon us,
This is the year of the Lord.*

Take us to the mountain,
Lift us in the shadow of Your hands;
Is this Your mighty angel,
Who stands astride the ocean and the land?
For in his hand Your mercy
Showers on a dry and barren place;
Take us to the mountain
In the city of our God.

*Robin Mark
Copyright © 1998 Thankyou Music*