

Genesis 12 Bible Study

In Genesis 12 we see the opening story of the Israelites as the people of God. The father of the nation is a man by the name of Abram.

First, let's take look back at the heredity of Abram. In Genesis 11:26. At the end of the genealogy, we see Terah was the father of Abram. *"When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran."* (Genesis 11:26)

What do you notice about Terah's age when we had his children?

If you recall in chapter 10 of Genesis, we saw the importance of the number seven. We see that number repeated here as Terah's age is seven times 10. Seventy was also the number of nations in the table of nations in that same chapter. What might Terah's age here tell us about the nature of God and His plans for His people?

If you notice the ages the other men listed in the genealogy of chapter 11, you will see a big difference between them and Terah. This might have been something that pointed to the unique future of Abraham, as Father of the children of Israel, and it also might foreshadow the bareness of Sarai and the late arrival of Isaac. It is an amazing thing to think that God often reveals Himself to us in trying and desperate situations for a distinct purpose. Have you ever found yourself in unfavorable circumstances that later proved to be all a part of God's perfect plan?

Knowing who Abram's father is, is important because it tells us something of the background of Abram's faith. Take a look at Joshua 24:2. What do you learn about the faith that Abram came out of?

"Joshua told all the people, "Here is what the Lord God of Israel says: 'In the distant past your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River,

including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor. They worshiped other gods,” (Joshua 24:2)

Abram clearly came from a family of pagans. They did not worship the one true God, but “other gods.” What do you think about the nation of Israel being fathered by a man who originally worshipped other gods?

Suddenly, with no explanations the tables turn, and we see Abram being spoken to by the Lord Himself. In this ***theophany***, or appearance of God to human eyes, what does God tell Abram to do?

“Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name.”” (Genesis 12:1–3)

Note: Theophanies of God appear throughout the old Testament. You see God coming to his people in person, like he came to Adam and Eve. And as an ‘angel of the Lord’ whom we see talking with Gideon in Judges 6:22, to Joshua in Joshua 5:13-14, to Zechariah in Zechariah 3:1-2 and in many more instances.

This call of Abram is the first recorded speech of God since he spoke at the Tower of Babel. What differences do you see between that speech and actions and this speech to Abram?

Table of Nations: *“And the Lord said, “If as one people all sharing a common language, they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be beyond them. Come, let’s go down and confuse their language so they won’t be able to understand each other.” So, the Lord*

scattered them from there across the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building the city.” (Genesis 11:6–8)

Abram: “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name.”” (Genesis 12:1–3)

What promises do we see that God gives to Abram here?

What makes this promise so unbelievable?

To find the answer, look at Genesis 11:30: *“But Sarai was barren; she had no children.” (Genesis 11:30)*

Even though this all might seem impossible from a human perspective, what is Abram’s response?

“So, Abram left, just as the Lord had told him to do, and Lot went with him. (Now Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran.)” (Genesis 12:4)

The chances are that you will never hear the audible voice of God, but His promises are still meant for you. They can be found in the pages of scripture. Which promises of God do you have the hardest time accepting without question, the way Abram accepted God’s call on His life? How would your life be different if you could freely accept those promises today?

In Genesis 11:27 we see another theophany: *“The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So, Abram*

built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.” (Genesis 12:7)

What does God promise Isaac with these words? What is Abrams response to this unthinkable promise? Why would he build an altar?

In the Old Testament the people of God would build altars to consecrate their lives to God and to commemorate His promises. We see this after the theophanies of Isaac (the son of Abraham), Jacob and Gideon.

Isaac: *“The Lord appeared to him [Isaac] that night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.” Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the Lord. He pitched his tent there, and his servants dug a well.” (Genesis 26:24–25)*

Jacob: *“He [Jacob] built an altar there and named the place El Bethel because there God had revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.” (Genesis 35:7)*

Gideon: *“When Gideon realized that it was the Lord’s messenger, he said, “Oh no! Master, Lord! I have seen the Lord’s messenger face to face!” The Lord said to him, “You are safe! Do not be afraid! You are not going to die!” Gideon built an altar for the Lord there and named it “The Lord is on friendly terms with me.” To this day it is still there in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.” (Judges 6:22–24)*

Moses: *“The Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in Joshua’s hearing; for I will surely wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. Moses built an altar, and he called it “The Lord is my Banner,”” (Exodus 17:14–15)*

Why do you think that after each of these theophanies these men felt compelled to build an altar?

In Genesis 12:10, the plot advances. Now we see Abram being affected by a famine in the land. What he does to escape death is surprising.

“There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay for a while because the famine was severe.” Genesis 12:10

The tragedy of famine is something that was common to the early patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all forced to relocate due to famine. (see Genesis 12:10; 26:1; 42:5; 47:11–13) In each instance, the moves were orchestrated by God to get His people where he wanted them to go. What looked like a tragedy ended up being the hand of God on His people. How could seeing this help you through the challenging circumstances in your own life?

In referring to the famine we see in the time of Joseph, Psalm 105:16 says this: *“He called down a famine upon the earth; he cut off all the food supply.”*

Knowing that God is behind your trying circumstances can be a great source of strength. Romans 8:28 confirms this: *“And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose, because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.”* (Romans 8:28–30)

Genesis 12 tells us the story of father Abraham, but it also tells us the tale of our own lives. You may never be the father of a nation,

but you are a child of God when you have the Spirit of God living inside of you.

This week remind yourself of God's sovereign hand on his people, no matter how stupid their choices. Consider your life and ask yourself if you can trust the one who judges justly and let go of your worry or fear over your current or future circumstances and your bad choices.

A Scriptural Prayer for recognizing God's sovereignty in your circumstances:

Father help me to remember that you did not spare Your own Son but gave him up for us all, and how much will You not also with him graciously give me all things? (Romans 8:32) I know that You, Jesus, are before all things, and in You all things hold together. (Colossians 1:17) Help me to count it all joy, when I meet trials of various kinds, for I know that the testing of my faith produces steadfastness. And that steadfastness must have its full effect, that I may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Right now, I lack wisdom, Lord. Thank you for being a generous giver without reproach. I ask in faith, for wisdom now, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (James 1:1-6) Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of faith, I will be glad and rejoice. (Philippians 2:17-18)