

Text: Gen 12.10-20

We return to “the Bible Story” this afternoon.

Our last look at this was the first occasion of God’s promise to Abram.

12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram,
“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;
2 And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
3 And 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 will be blessed.”

In obedience to God’s promise, Abram headed off to Canaan. In Genesis 13.2, we find that part of the promise is now true:

Gn 13.2 ¶ Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.

Between these two high points, we have the curious story of Abram going to Egypt and lying about the status of Sarah, his wife.

This is very puzzling to us, but God included it in the Bible Story, so he means for us to learn from it — as a negative example, at least! (No, don’t “go thou and do likewise!”)

Read Gen 12.10-13.2

I. The key facts of the story

A. Famine (10)

1. Parallel between famine being very severe (*kābēd hārā’āb*) and very rich (*kābēd mē’ōd*)

a. Very = “*kābēd*” (same word as “glory” – has the idea of weight, immensity)

B. Egypt (10)

C. Abram's lie (11-13)

1. We should remember that Sarah is 65 yrs old at this point
2. We should not be too hard on Abram, our culture is not their culture
3. Yet we must note that Abram put Sarah at risk, and God's promise was to Abram *and* Sarah as it turns out
4. From chapter 20, where Abram repeats the lie with Abimelech, we find that Sarah is Abram's half-sister (this does not mitigate the lie)

D. Pharaoh's gifts (16)

1. Parallel between "very beautiful" (14) and "very rich" (13.2)
2. We do not know Abram's position before going to Egypt, but after he is very rich

E. The Lord's intervention (17)

1. Plagues is the same word as is used for the plagues in the Exodus
2. Lit., "the Lord plagued them with plagues"

F. Pharaoh's rebuke (18-19)

G. Abram's departure (20)

H. Abram's riches (13.2)

II. Significant observations about the story

A. Abram and Egypt

1. Like Abram, Jacob goes to Egypt during a famine
2. Like Abram, Israel is delivered from Egypt by plagues
3. Like Abram, Israel "plundered" Egypt as they departed
4. There may also be a parallel in the second exodus from Babylon (Ezr 1.6)

Ezr 1.6 All those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering.

“Thus ‘the past is not allowed to remain in the past’ whose lessons continue to instruct God’s people.”¹

B. Abram and self

1. In fear, Abram tried to solve his problem man’s way
2. Despite Abram’s fear, God solved Abram’s problem God’s way

“Moses would have his readers learn of God’s gracious protection of His plan through divine intervention and deliverance. He would also have them learn of the folly of trying to deliver themselves from difficulties by means of deceptive schemes.”²

C. Abram and promise

1. Abram is God’s chosen man, the father of faith
2. Yet here, he doesn’t act in faith, but fear
3. Point: the promise isn’t dependent on Abram, but on God

“The blessing depends on God’s call, not Abram’s conduct.”³

So, too, is it with salvation. The blessing depends on Christ, not you.

- Abram should not have lied, and you should not sin
- But... the blessing doesn’t depend on you

D. The promise still stands

1. Remember, Abram didn’t lose the promise by disobedience and fear
2. Modern Israel is a mostly non-believing state, having rejected her Messiah
3. Will God forget his promises?

¹ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 123.

² Allen P. Ross, “Genesis,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 50.

³ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 1B:122.

Remember how Jacob and his sons behaved... God preserved them from famine.

Remember how Israel behaved before and after the Exodus... God still brought them to the promised land.

Remember how the Kings behaved, and ended up in Babylon...

Remember how they treated Jesus?

“The blessing depends on God’s call, not Abram’s conduct.”⁴

Conclusion:

The hero of this story is God.

Think about your life. How often do you fail God.

The hero of your story is God.

You should love him, serve him, worship him, and never forsake him.

⁴ Mathews, 1B:122.