

Leadership And Covenants (Part Sixteen)

John W. Ritenbaugh
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We are going to be studying into the very next covenant following the one made with Noah. It is commonly called the Abrahamic covenant because it was made by God with Abraham, or Abram as he was originally named. We will begin in Genesis 11.

Genesis 11:1-9 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly,” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.” So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

We will begin here in order to provide a platform for an interesting contrast between the scene described as Genesis 11 begins, compared to how Genesis 12 begins as God's dealings with Abram proceeds.

Genesis 11 shows the people degenerating into the same kind of behavior that preceded the Flood. I am partly doing this to be perhaps a little bit of

help toward giving our faith a bit of perspective regarding time. We all know as a fact that God operates regarding time differently than we do. Here is an accurate observation regarding the Abrahamic covenant. Even though made with only one man and his family, it impacts mankind's history all the way to the New Heavens and the New Earth and beyond that.

This is no small amount of time! It literally involves multiple billions of people who are for the most part totally unaware of it and have been unaware of it for century upon century. And yet there it sits, right in the Bible. It is one of the most massive promises that God has ever made to anybody under any circumstance.

This covenant is huge in its consequences. However, we must live by faith, aware of these huge consequences because knowledge of this covenant works to establish in us the very ultimate in regard to hope. At the same time the consequences of this covenant enveloped so much time and such significant history, it can make us feel as though we are nothing but an insignificant passing thought. This part is humbling, to say the least.

To those who disembarked from the ark following the Flood, life went on for those people. Their time was at first used to get the business of life moving once again. I have no doubt they were busy proceeding to get some semblance of normal back into their lives once again. Living quarters were built, seed was planted, crops were harvested, children were born, and government began to be established and functioning. Thus the ordinary business of life gradually, almost imperceptibly shoved the Flood and memories of it into the background of thought. Not much for those who personally experienced it, like Noah and his family, but most certainly for those who had not had firsthand experience with it.

I want you to consider this—something that just happened this past week, on Wednesday. This nation marked the anniversary of the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor that began World War II for this nation. World War II was a major historical event that impacted on the entire world. How often do you think people think of World War II today? If it had not been for what happened this week, hardly anybody would ever think of it. I am sure that it is not thought of all that often. Do you realize that in the Second World War fifty million people perished? Do you realize that even as I am reflecting on

it in regard to the Flood, a person would have to be about eighty to even have had some small amount of actual real time living experiences and personal memories of World War II?

I think briefly about how much has happened in this world since August of 1945, when the fighting between us and the Japanese ended. In that August I was three months shy of becoming thirteen. From August 1945-2016 is seventy-one years. Concerning all of that seventy-one years is but a blink of an eye to compare with all of history, but how many people today are even moved to think about World War II, even though it was indeed tremendously tragic, climatic, and a destructive event in which fifty million people died and the destruction of Europe seemed almost endless. Seventy-one years later it is rapidly fading from peoples' minds, except for those historians and the few who remain that personally experienced it.

I bring this up because mankind has not changed that much since the Flood. We see a small bit of evidence that God has included in His Word regarding what was happening as peoples' memories of the Flood were gradually fading and a sense of urgency regarding obedience to God was gradually diminishing.

Genesis 9:20-25 And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren."

Exactly why God included this in His Book regarding Noah I do not know. This was a man of sterling character, you would think that he would never do something like this. I am sure that God put things in His Book with a great deal of wisdom, as there was a reason, a good solid reason why God put that in His Book. Noah's sin undoubtedly played a part in the far more destructive sin of Canaan. Perhaps God put it in there so that it would stand as a

reminder to later readers, like you and me, that none of us are immune from the temptations to sin, even as the more grievous double sin of adultery and murder committed by David also reminds us later.

People of sterling character, and yet here we have Noah, a couple hundred of years after the Flood and he commits a sin. It is a good thing to remember, human nature never changes, and we are *all* susceptible, even when we experience tragic occurrences that God permits to occur on the earth. It is not all that difficult for us to slip and do something foolish.

Genesis 10:8-10 Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.” And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar.

Nimrod was Noah's grandson, he was not all that far removed from the most righteous man on earth at the time. Here he establishing a kingdom, thus by the third generation following Noah, the population was great enough that already a kingdom was being assembled. Meanwhile the Flood was becoming a fading deterrent to sin.

Nimrod is described as being a mighty hunter against the Lord, or before the Lord. Against is a better translation of that term. The Hebrew term rendered “before,” has the sense that Nimrod was an impediment blocking, deterring the Lord. He was *against* God. He and his wife Semiramis were not godly people, as ancient history clearly shows. These two reinstituted as best they could the spirit of the Nephilim, from Genesis 6.

By the time we reach the beginning of chapter 11, earth's population was expanding very rapidly and the leaders upon the expanding population wanted to get control of the situation. So they made plans to do things in what they believed was a more appropriate manner. By the time chapter 12 begins, if one counts Shem as the first generation following the Flood, Abram had already been born. By that time we are already in the tenth generation of people born since the Flood. This is the tenth generation of people who routinely lived hundreds of years longer than we do. Abram himself is already seventy-five years old.

I am doing these things so that you can see how rapidly things are changing, they are not changing for the better. Nimrod is already the head of a kingdom, and that is bad news.

Genesis 11:1-4 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another “Come let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, “Come let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

Here we see a brief summary of mankind's boastful plans to accomplish things on the strength of their own skill and understanding. There is no indication in this context that they sought God. There is some indication that they did think about God at least, and that is noted, not with a great deal of strength but it at least lets us know that they are at least thinking about it. There is no doubt they gave the Flood some consideration. Genesis 11:4 mentions the possibility of scattering, that is an implication that they thought God may scatter them. They also mentioned the building of a tower whose top is in the heavens and thus higher than flood waters, which it seems to indicate.

They were thinking about Him, but they did not consult Him. They took Him into consideration, so they thought they would make some plans that would include Him within them, but they would be safe. They would build things, such structures, in such a way that they would be safe.

I believe that their concern was more about a natural disaster somewhat akin to the Flood, but instead what God did was very effective without destroying their lives. By inhibiting their ability to communicate, they were effectively stopped in their tracks for a good while.

In reality their concern for a flood was minor. They boldly rejected respect for God, His word, and the evidence of His power in the Flood, because after

all, that was roughly almost a thousand years earlier. How fast things are moving! We are only in Genesis 11. Know this of a surety: God gives people fair warning, even as Adam and Eve had been taught by God before they were tested by Satan, those following the Flood had been taught as well. They should have given Him more place in their thinking.

Their teaching had begun under Noah. How long did Noah live after the Flood? Three hundred and fifty years and he was a preacher of righteousness. Even as the immediate survival needs had been gotten out of the way and been taken care of—building homes, beginning farms—what was Noah's theme? “Don’t forget, remember this occurred, remember why it occurred, remember what life was like before the Flood.”

The teaching was continued on by Shem. Three hundred and fifty years Noah preached after the Flood and he lived another one hundred and so years beyond that. Shem lived five hundred years following the Flood. The people were warned, they had no excuse for ignoring God the way they did. They thought of Him, but they did not think very deeply, and they made no real plans following it. So the unconverted planners, as we see there in Genesis 11, were aware of the Flood because it was a historical fact. They were also aware of the social conditions on earth that preceded the Flood.

I am sure that Noah and Shem, and perhaps last of all, Eber, made them aware of God and the awesome power of His judgment, until the calling of Abram. In the persons of Noah and Shem, the new creation following the Flood began with two witnesses who personally experienced the Flood in its entirety from beginning to end.

I John 5:18-19 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

Not only were people forgetting, ignoring the preaching of Noah and Shem, and perhaps Eber as well. Satan was there too. Some things never change. So mankind under the deceitful influence of Satan, in pride carelessly rejected

the truth, God and His authority, and His power. We see it there in Genesis 11. Some things never change and thus mankind did not keep themselves from the subtle onslaught of Satan.

It is interesting that as we live and move toward the end of mankind's dominion over earth, man's dominion is going to end the way it began: with two witnesses. It is going to end and people will ignore what the Two Witnesses preach to them. It will be rejected before Christ returns. God gives plenty of warning to people so they cannot say that He ignored them.

As we began to see in Genesis 10, large numbers of people soon found themselves living in slavery under the dictatorship of the despot Nimrod and his wife Semiramis, who patterned themselves after the giants of pre-Flood times. By way of contrast drawn from Genesis 12, Abram apparently made no plans for anything significant, but God had plans for Abram. Thus God began to sanctify Abram by abruptly appearing and speaking directly to Him.

Genesis 12:1-4 Now the Lord has said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Acts 7:1-2 [Stephen is speaking] Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?" And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran."

I am doing this so that you will see the time elements that are involved here. The first thing God did, as far as we can see here, is He appeared before him in Genesis 12. This took place later. I want to peruse this a little bit. Before He appeared to Abram, there is no indication of any previous contact between them, but Joshua made an interesting comment in his final remarks to the heads of the Israelitish families, not long before Joshua's death.

Joshua 24:1-2 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.’ [Terah is Abraham's father]

Joshua 24:14 “Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!”

Here is another thing that never seems to change. Abraham was born into and nurtured in that idolatrous household. He grew up a pagan, he was surrounded by that pagan culture at least seventy-five years of his life, in his home city of Ur. We can add to the impact of the persistent nature of idolatry within Abram's family because we know that later, even in Jacob's life (who was Abram's grandson), that household gods of Laban's family from whom came Jacob's wives Leah and Rachel, were still part of their religious thinking. It is hard to get away from paganism, even when you are from a family as great as Abraham's.

I wonder if any of us ever thought that we too, like Abram, have been born into and reared in a pagan culture. We have. We might have been deceived regarding this historical fact, but in what way? Because this is an Israelitish nation and we have had possession of and wide distribution of the Bible, and perhaps we were indeed taught some biblical truths. We generally do not think of America as being a pagan culture. Also because the religion of this nation was wrongly called Christian, right from its very founding, we do not think of ourselves as being reared in a pagan culture, but we are in reality not much better off than Abram. In fact, we may be better off than he was in terms of wrong knowledge.

I am certain that his religious bent was certainly not as pure as the driven snow at the time that God called him. First of all, that is not God's way of calling people. He does not call and reveal Himself to people who are already converted. If that is so, then John 3 means nothing.

John 3:2-3 [Christ's conversation with Nicodemus] This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again [from above, something that God does from heaven above], he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The word born means the beginning of something, it did not exist before or was not fully functioning before it was born. The knowledge of God and His Kingdom must be divinely revealed and that revelation, and its spiritual impact, begins solely at God's discretion and according to His timing.

John 6:44-45 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

This is the first direct contact Nicodemus ever had with Jesus, and the first thing that Jesus instructed him was, you cannot understand what I am talking about unless you are born from above. It takes God to precipitate the ability to grasp what He is doing. It is He who makes that possible. This verse confirms that no one can come to Jesus "unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day." This is a very conclusive statement. How anybody can wiggle themselves around this I do not know.

Do you know who Nicodemus was? He was a member of the Sanhedrin. This was the ruling group of the Jewish people there in Jerusalem. He would certainly have qualified today as a doctor of the law. The Sanhedrin was the supreme court, as it were, for Jerusalem. They decided theological issues. I am doing this so that you understand that we are not dealing with some old high school student, this was a man who was a doctor of the law, he was consulted by people on spiritual issues. A man in that position undoubtedly believed in a Creator God. He also had a tremendous amount of theological knowledge. Not all of it was good, a great deal of it was Jewish and it was wrong.

This is one reason Jesus reacted to him the way He did. “You mean you don’t get that?!” It is really admirable of Nicodemus that he admitted that he did not understand—he had enough humility—that he did not get it. That he misinterpreted what Jesus said because he interpreted what Jesus said as though it was a physical pregnancy and birth. “You mean you can crawl back into your mother’s womb and be born again?” This was a guy who had a great deal of spiritual understanding, but he did not get being born again.

What we can learn from Nicodemus is this. That God indeed does call people who believe that there is a Creator God. In Nicodemus’ case, because he was also a member of the Sanhedrin, he also had a great deal of general religious knowledge. But notice what Nicodemus said in response to what Jesus said, in verse 9.

John 3:9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

Are you seeing what I am getting at here? This man, despite the fact that he does have some truth—there is a Creator God—he is not putting the spiritual parts together correctly yet. That has to be revealed to him—he is not converted yet. So he may have in his mind that there is a Creator God, but that is a far cry from actually *believing* God. Do you see the shade of difference between the two? One merely believes that God exists, the other *believes God*, what He says. Nicodemus was not there yet.

People can know that there is a Creator God and not be converted at all. That is something that God has to do and that is why Jesus said in John 6:44 “no one can come to Me unless the Father draws them.” God is in complete charge of the people that He is dealing with and converting and is going to be a part of His Family. Never forget that—God is running the whole show.

John 3:10-17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And a

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

We must never forget what I am about to tell you so that we get things in the right order in regard to what God is doing.

We have learned regarding Adam and Eve and Noah too, that God's gifts, which we generally call His grace (nothing wrong with that, that is a good word for it), precedes, comes before, the actual understanding and practice in those called and sanctified one's lives. This is very important. We follow God, there is a big difference than trying to *lead* God. We follow Him because He wants us to understand that *He is the Creator*, not us! This is the problem that Nicodemus was having, he was trying to get this through his mind and understand what Jesus was talking about, and the reason he could not understand was because God had not opened his mind yet. He had not given him the grace to grasp what was going on, but that grace was on its way. Nicodemus became a very fine Christian.

We are going to review Genesis 6, with Noah again, so that we see this particular aspect of God's creating Himself in us.

Genesis 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Why did God put the word found in there? Noah *found* grace. It is what it is because it was not in Noah until he found it. It was not a part of his natural human makeup. It was not until he found the grace that God gave to him.

Genesis 6:9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect [or blameless] in his generations. Noah walked with God.

We will put everything here so that you get it all in the right order. There is a specific reason why God put that the way He did. It was not until Noah found the grace that he became just, perfect, blameless, of solid integrity, and he built the ark. All of those things follow the gift of grace, not before.

All we have to do is transfer what I just told you back to what Jesus was going through with Nicodemus and we begin to understand the order of things in our conversion. We are not converted until God leads us to find grace. So we do not have the grace until God gives it and then once we have the grace, we can begin to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, because we begin to get the understanding of things in there right order. That is God creating in us.

Once you understand this, it is humbling to understand that everything depends on God's working in us. The same was true with Adam and Eve. What did God give to Adam and Eve as a gift? He gave them the earth and all the earth's magnificence was opened up for Adam and Eve to be able to use. That was a gift to them and of course, later on to those who were produced as a result of Adam and Eve. You understand the process is the way it is, God creates by giving gifts and then once we receive the gift, we possess the ability to be able to do what He requires of us. This is why I said, He never puts us into a position that is over our head because He gave us the gift to be able to meet the challenge.

I am not telling you it is always going to be easy. Can you imagine the hard work that Noah had to go through to build an ark? God gave Noah the ability to build an ark, and Noah exercised his faith, the talents that God gave him, and he succeeded admirably. That is why I said why in the world would God put that about Noah and his sin in the Bible? I think it is a cautionary measure for us to take note of and know that even though God may be doing things for us it does not mean that we are without sin. Of course that did not cost Noah his salvation.

Remember the order of things. With Noah it is very easy to see. God gave him grace. When Noah got the grace he began to use the gifts that God gave him and he became a man of solid integrity, just, perfect, blameless, and built the ark. All of that *after* he found the grace.

Likewise with Adam and Eve. They did not face the serpent until God said they were ready to face him. They failed where Noah succeeded, but nonetheless we begin to see the principle involved here.

People may come to strongly believe that God truly exists, through thoughtful study and meditation, and prayer, and this is good. They may intellectually grasp many things about Him and His purpose before their calling, but that is still a far cry from actually motivating one to submit the conduct of one's life to the Creator, His kingdom, and purpose in their life, totally and absolutely devoted to Him with great dedication. These things proceed from conversion.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God [Faith is a gift from God.], not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship [Do you see that? Paul makes it so clear. We are *His* workmanship.], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Do we see the process there? Step by step by step God is creating us in His own image—in the image of Jesus Christ. This is another direct, straightforward statement. The called, you and me, are God's workmanship, except for a small portion in which we submit to Him in obedience, thus making use of the gifts of His grace. One of God's major gifts is faith, and that is why James stated, “Show me your faith *apart* from your work and I will show you my faith *by* my works.”

It is conversion that produces the works of God in the order that God shows.

Back to Nicodemus. He had a great deal of knowledge *about* God, but he had not been called, and he was not converted as Jesus talked with him in John 3. Because of this understanding, I believe that there is no doubt that God had prepared Abram in some way before even speaking directly to him. The evidence of this is the manner and level by which Abram responded. It is a possibility that he was questioning his pagan beliefs, as shown by his strong response. God speaking directly to him was not just an out of the blue occurrence that produced a powerful and faithful response.

Let us go back and look again at what God told Abram to do.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the Lord had said to Abram; “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

I do not know how many people God has ever said something like that to. That was awesome! God told him to leave his country. We have learned enough about Abram from ancient writings to know that he was not a country bumpkin, if you understand what I mean. He came from a city that was recognized over the then world as being a center of technology and understanding, and inventiveness. Those people lived in two-and-three story houses. They had flush toilets on the second floor of their houses, four thousand years ago. I am not kidding you. There is a book called *The Bible as History*. Those people could do trigonometry.

Abram was a man of great intelligence and understanding. We do not know what kind of work he did but there seems to be some indication that God was working on his mind to some degree, making him think about what kind of a society he was living in, things about the Creator, and things of that nature. When God told him to leave his country, his family, his father's house, and move himself to an unnamed land, which eventually turned out to be Canaan, that was shocking when you consider the way Abraham responded.

How many people would just drop everything and leave? God was working with him. When He finally spoke to him directly and appeared to him, Abraham was ready to move and he did. This teaches us something. Think about this. Sometimes God's calling of us tears us away from relationships and other familiar things that you may have had for decades.

This happened to me, not as dramatic as with Abraham, but it was of the same order of things. When Evelyn and I were called in 1959, the Ritenbaugh family was fairly large, and as I now see it unusually close. My father was one of seven children, my mother was one of five. I had a whole

slew of cousins, nieces, and nephews on both sides of the family. Evelyn was one of seven children as well. I did not think of it at the time, in 1959 when Evelyn and I were called, our calling pretty much severed us, especially me, from all of those relationships. This happened even though Evelyn and I continued to live near them, however, we hardly associated with them from that time forward because all of our associations were in the church. It is almost as if my side of the family just ceased to exist.

Richard and I had a meeting with my one remaining cousins. We went up to Pittsburgh in 2013. All the rest had moved off. One of the more interesting things was we all went to the same church. It was a Christian Missionary Alliance Church. We both got baptized there. We were serious about our calling, but within a week or two we left it, because the truth hit us like a ton of bricks. That baptism was no good. We stepped away from that church and that was almost the last time we ever saw any of them again.

I can understand what happened with Abraham. God did not speak to me but God's calling of us was pretty strong. We were really serious about it.

There is a bit of a mystery here in Genesis 12, because Abram went to Haran first. Haran was not on a direct route from Ur to Canaan. We know that God was going to take Abram to Canaan, but Haran is six hundred miles northwest of Ur. That is a long walk. In addition, we find out in Genesis 12 that they then walked from Haran to Canaan. That was another four hundred and fifty miles. What is so interesting is that if Abram chose to go from Ur directly to Canaan, it would have only been six hundred and fifty miles, the difference is it was straight across the desert. That probably had something to do with why God took him first to Haran.

But there is a little bit more to this story that is kind of mysterious. We do not find anywhere in Scripture that God directly told Abram to travel to either city from Ur. He just said to leave. God's direction was pretty cryptic. Abram had to act in faith and he did under the circumstances the best he could. But there is a second puzzle. Why did he wait in Haran for his father to die before he left? Maybe there is a partial answer here in Genesis 11.

Genesis 11:31 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son

Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.

Here is a possibility: that Abram was not leading this pilgrimage, his father was. He was still under the direction of his father and he let his father take the lead. It was the father, then, that took them to Haran. God permitted it as well, so there was no great sin involved there. The Bible does not tell us exactly why that occurred, but when did they leave Haran? Not until Terah died and that was the signal, and what occurred there was probably an act of mercy on God's part. He allowed him to continue to pay homage to his father, and he did that in following Terah to Haran but when Terah died God said, "Okay that's enough. We are going to go where I want to take you," and they did.

We will step backward in time, before Abram ever left Ur. Go with me to the most astounding verses in the Bible once we begin to understand what we are dealing with here. These are called by researchers the "I will" promises. This is what God said to Abram, and it is so astounding:

Promise Number 1 "Go to a land I will show you."

Promise Number 2 "I will make you a great nation."

Promise Number 3 "I will bless you."

Promise Number 4 "I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing."

Promise Number 5 "I will bless those who bless you."

Promise Number 6 "I will curse him who curses you."

Promise Number 7 "I will give your descendants this land." (Genesis 12:7)
This was actually the second of these promises that was fulfilled.

Those are some the most awesome promises given in the entire Bible, once we begin to see what is involved in what God promises this one man.

