

Norwood's Notes: Brief Summaries of Bible Stories

These "notes" are intended to provide a general overview of the basic stories of the Bible in the hope of building greater biblical knowledge and encouraging Bible reading and study. For more information, visit www.UjimaChurch.org

Copyright © 2018 by Dr. J.R. Norwood * All Rights Reserved
*May be copied in its entirety and distributed for the purpose of Christian Education
with appropriate citation credit*

2. Highlights from Genesis 12-29, "Abraham to Jacob"

Genesis now begins to focus in on the descendants of Noah's son, Shem, named "Abram" and his wife, "Sarai." God spoke to Abram and told him to journey far from his home to a land that God would show him and promised to him and his descendants after him. God promised to bless Abram and, through him, to bless all people. Abram believed and obediently followed God's direction, taking his wife and nephew, Lot, with him. Sarai was so beautiful that Abraham was afraid that, as a foreigner in a strange land, someone may kill him in order to take Sarai as a wife. But, in each and every situation, God protected Abram and Sarai and increased them with the blessing of great wealth and the respect of those around them (Gen 12). At the time, Abram and Sarai had no children.

Abram and his nephew Lot were shepherds with many people working for them. They decided to divide their flocks and spread out in the land that God had promised. Abram gave Lot his pick of the land, and Lot chose what he thought looked best (Gen 13).

Lot believed in his uncle's God, but Lot tended to make poor decisions. Where he chose to live resulted in him being captured by a conquering enemy. Abram rallied his men and was used by God to rescue Lot, even though the enemy outnumbered him (Gen 14). Lot lived in the wicked city of Sodom, which was close to the other wicked city of Gomorrah. God told Abraham that he was about to judge the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah and destroy the cities, but at Abram's request, the cities would be spared if just ten faithful men could be found within Sodom (Gen 18). When the angels God sent arrived in the city, not even ten who were faithful could be found and Lot and his family were rescued from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, Lot's wife disobeyed the warning of the angels to not look back upon the fiery destruction of the cities, and she perished because of her disobedience (Gen 19).

God promised Abram that his descendants would someday possess the land that, in Abram's day, was ruled by other nations (Gen 15). Sarai could not bear children, so Hagar, her Egyptian servant, became a surrogate mother and bore Abram a son, named "Ishmael" (Gen 16). Rivalry rose up between Sarai and Hagar, ultimately resulting in Hagar and Ishmael's departure, but God was with Hagar and promised to

protect and bless Ishmael also (Gen 21). However, God appears to Abram, whose name he changes to "Abraham" (Gen 17) and lets him know that the special plan to one day bless all people through Abram's offspring would not be through Ishmael, but through a son to be born through his wife (Gen 18), whose name God changes to "Sarah." As a sign of this special promise and relationship with God, Abraham and all the generations of his male descendants would be circumcised. Though she previously could not bear children, God kept his promise and Sarah became pregnant at 90 years old when Abraham was 100 years old.

One day, God told Abraham to do the unthinkable... to sacrifice Isaac, the son promised by God, as a burnt offering! Abraham obeyed the Lord and prepared to make the sacrifice, with Isaac willingly submitting. As Abraham lifted his knife over Isaac to slay him, God stopped him (Gen 22). This had only been a test of Abraham's faith. God provided a ram, whose horns were caught in a bush, as the substitute sacrifice. This was a foreshadowing of God's plan of salvation through Jesus, who would be our substitute upon the cross, dying for our sins about 2000 years later.

Isaac, with whom God had reaffirmed his promise to Abraham (Gen 26:2-5), married his second cousin, Rebekah (Gen 24). Like Abraham before him, Isaac and Rebekah are protected and blessed by God. Rebekah, however, was unable to bear children; but, after Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, Rebekah gave birth to twin boys, Esau and Jacob (Gen 25). The older brother, Esau, was a rough and tough outdoorsman, while Jacob, the younger brother by mere moments, was more of a home-body and thoughtful. As the older brother, Esau's birthright was to be the primary heir and to inherit the greatest portion of his father's wealth and authority. Yet, one day when returning from the field and hungry from his labors, Esau thoughtlessly agreed to give his birthright to Jacob in exchange for a simple bowl of stew and some bread. Years before this, while Rebekah was still pregnant with them, the Lord spoke to her and told her that her twins would become two nations, and the older would serve that younger (Gen 25:23).

When Isaac was old and had lost most of his eyesight, he summoned Esau to bless him as his primary heir, telling him to hunt and prepare a special meal for the blessing. As Esau departed, Rebekah told Jacob to disguise himself as Esau and trick Isaac into giving him his brother's birthright blessing. By the time Esau returned, Isaac had unknowingly given his blessing to Jacob (Gen 27). Esau's vengeful anger forced Jacob to flee and take refuge with his mother's brother, Laban. As Jacob fled, he had a dream in which angels were going up and down a ladder (or stairway) between heaven and earth, and God spoke to him and reaffirmed the promise given to Abraham and Isaac, saying it would now continue through Jacob (Gen 28), although Jacob had a lot of growing to do spiritually.