

Pioneers

Genesis 12 v 1-9

Context:

This Sunday we celebrate Windrush Day, an annual opportunity to remember those pioneers who left their homes in the Caribbean to answer the call from Britain to help rebuild the nation following the devastation of the second world war. We ought to be eternally grateful to them, but tragically they and their descendants have too often been badly treated. From the initial racism that greeted many of the original migrants to the more recent Windrush Scandal, Britain has much to be ashamed of in its attitude towards and treatment of our precious brothers and sisters. We thank God for their tenacity and determination, for the extraordinary contribution they have made to our national life. Here at St James we are honoured that many in our church family trace their origins to the Windrush generation and it is a privilege to be the spiritual home of The Friends of the Heart Foundation of Jamaica, a stellar example of the charitable and entrepreneurial spirit of that generation and their descendants. Of course, there are many examples of pioneers in the biblical story, men and women who left everything in obedience to God's call. In today's study we will explore one such pioneer, the great patriarch Abraham.

Observation:

1. What command does the Lord give to Abram in v 1?
2. What promises accompany this command in v 2-3?
3. What was Abram's response to this command in v 4?
4. Where did Abram leave and to where did he travel in v 5, and with whom and what did he go?
5. Where did he travel in v 6 and who else was living in the land at that time?
6. What promise did God make to him in v 7 and how did Abram respond?
7. Where did he travel in v 8 and what did he do on arrival?
8. Where did he travel to in v 9?

Meaning:

NOTE: Reading Acts 7 v 1-4, it becomes clear that God initially called Abram when he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (modern Iraq) and that he left there and settled in Haran (modern Syria) for a while. Only after his father, Terah, died in Haran, did he continue his journey to Canaan. So, Genesis 12 v 1 recalls the initial call of God to Abram in Ur (hence: 'The LORD *had* said to Abram...' and then describes the onward journey from Haran into Canaan.

1. What and who was Abram commanded to leave behind in v 1? Why do you think God's command to leave was so comprehensive (see Joshua 24 v 2-3 for a possible clue)?
2. God didn't initially tell Abram where he wanted him to go (he only told him once he had arrived!). How do you think Abram would have felt about that and how do you think he decided where to go?

3. What do you think the promises of v 2-3 would have meant to Abram and how were these promises fulfilled in the rest of the biblical story?
4. V 4-5 suggests that having stayed in Haran for a while, once Abram's father died, God reminded him of his original call, and Abram set off again (see also Acts 7 v 2-4). So, in light of this extended stay in Haran, and noting that he brought his extended family with him from Ur to Haran, and took his nephew Lot with him when he left Haran for Canaan, to what extent do you think Abram obeyed the specifics of God's call?
5. It is only in v 7 that God tells Abram that Canaan is the land he wanted him and his descendants to settle in. What do you think it would have been like for Abram to travel all those years not really knowing what the required destination was? What do you think would have helped him to be obedient to God's command despite only partially knowing God's plan (see Hebrews 11 v 8-10 for possible clues)?
6. In v 7-8 we read of Abram twice building altars to the Lord. What do you think was Abram's reason for doing this and what might it tell us about him?

Application:

1. Abram was a pioneer who responded to God's call, however imperfectly, and God used him mightily in his purposes for the world. What kind of characteristics make a pioneer successful and can you think of any other pioneers in the biblical story?
2. Can you think of any pioneers in history, outside the Bible, who have inspired you in your life and walk with God?
3. How might God be calling you to be a pioneer for him today?

Pray:

- Thank God for Abram.
- Pray for grace and courage to follow his example.
- Thank God for the pioneers of the Windrush Generation and all they have given to our nation and our church.