

## YEAR OF THE MESSAGE: Moses

### Law and Order: Divine Intent

#### Abraham and the Patriarchs: The Call of God: Genesis 12:1-4a

Intro: God chooses a man, a family, and a nation to be ambassadors of his grace in the earth. Through them God promises to bless all people.

Abraham hears the call of God to leave his homeland and make a journey to an unknown place. He responds in faith to this mysterious directive from an unseen God.

Faith is revealed to be the bedrock for any relationship with God. In order to be right with God, a person must choose and walk in faith. Faith is essential to the covenant God makes with man.

#### I. HEAR THE DIVINE SUMMONS: The Lord said to Abram...v1

A. God speaks. This is a consistent message of the Bible. We have a talking, communicating, conversational God.

1. He speaks through his Spirit. That is the only way that Abram could possibly have heard God. He did not have a Bible. He certainly had some teaching, written or oral, from his father Terah and his other ancestors, about their experience of the Almighty. He probably knew the accounts of creation and the flood. But he had to hear from the Spirit of God for this specific instruction. This was not a written instruction. God spoke to his heart and maybe to his ear.

2. He speaks through his written Word, the Bible. God watched over the writing of the Book of Books. We believe this and know it to be true. Abram was certainly influenced by the stories of God passed on to him by his father and others.

3. He speaks through circumstances. Abram was living in Ur of the Chaldees while his father was still alive. This was a pagan city. They worshiped false gods, idols that were not God. This might have been part of the way that God spoke to Abram and to his father, Terah.

4. He speaks through his people. I believe that Terah was a man of faith. He moved his family from Ur before his death. He had an influence on his son, Abram.

B. People hear and understand. God speaks, and people hear. God could speak to you today, and you could hear him speaking. You can both hear and understand what God is saying to you. This is a consistent message of the Bible. Adam and Eve heard and understood. Noah heard and understood. Abram heard and understood. Moses heard and understood, and so can you.

#### II. MAKE THE DARING DECISION: So Abram left as the Lord had told him—v4

A. God's Word is always Command. You cannot hear and understand the Word of God without knowing the call to action. God does not speak just to make small talk. God speaks to be heard and to be obeyed. His voice is always in the imperative even when it is in the indicative.

B. You must decide. You have a decision to make when you have heard and understood the Word of God. You must either obey or disobey. It is that simple.

1. Your ability to decide indicates that you are a moral agent. You have freedom of choice. You have a will, and you can reject God's gracious offer if you choose.

2. Your ability to decide indicates that you are responsible and accountable. God has MOLDED you to rule and to tend in his world. When he speaks, this is the voice of your superior, your commander. You will give an account one day for you answer.

C. Your most daring decision is to obey what God says. This will take you on a journey of remarkable potential and possibilities. It will open the world to you.

1. To disobey is to refuse the divine offer of guidance and assistance and to limit yourself to the measly resources and abilities that are at your disposal.

2. To disobey is also to refuse the purpose of God for you life. It is to reject faith and to choose skepticism and disbelief. In fact, this is the most fundamental decision that any human being makes in a lifetime faith or unbelief. This is one instance where the

dichotomy is true and inescapable. Will you believe God or will you not? Everything depends on your answer.

D. obeying what he says. God's word always calls for adjustments and changes in our lives.

**III. NAVIGATE THE DAILY SOJOURN:** Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live (sojourn) there for a while—Genesis 12:10

\*\*\* Janet and I bought one of those new-fangled navigation devices recently. It tells you audibly when you are to turn. If you are not watching yourself, you can get run over following those instructions.

Generally you get the instructions turn by turn. You make one turn and then you get the information about the next one.

A. **To Sojourn** means to “abide, dwell in, dwell with, remain, inhabit, be a stranger, be continuing”

1. Abram was definitely a sojourner. He lived one day at a time, one campsite at a time.

2. He set out not knowing where he was going. God told him to leave, and so he left.

Hebrews 11:8-10 says, By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger living in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

B. Sojourning means you **adjust your life** to God's call. Abram and Sarai had to pack up and move physically.

1. Adjust your mind, your heart, and your inner self.

2. Adjust your family and your relationships.

3. Adjust your geography.

4. Adjust your dreams and your plans.

C. You navigate your daily sojourn by

1. listening to God and looking to God

2. **remembering your calling**, your over-arching purpose

3. **trusting that God** will give you notice of the next turn

4. adjusting your life daily to **his instructions**

D. You live as a **nomad**, continually at the beck and call of your Master. You are ready for deployment at any moment of any day.

E. You keep your eye on the **CITY WITH FOUNDATIONS** whose **BUILDER** and **MAKER** is God. This is the goal toward which you strive. And it is the model that stays in your mind as you manage the part of the planet under your care.

1. This vision of the CITY of GOD keeps you from being **seduced** by visions of “heaven on earth.” You take all utopian visions with a grain of salt because you know they can't compare to what God has planned in the future.

2. This vision of the CITY of GOD keeps you from **assimilating** completely into any human culture. While you appreciate your personal culture and heritage, you know that it is marred by sin. You are ultimately loyal without conditions only to God and his Word.

3. This vision of the CITY of GOD keeps you from **laziness** and **resignation**. It keeps you working in your own city toward the goal of making it more like the CITY of GOD where there are no tears and there is no pain or death. You work to relieve suffering and pain around you. You do so with the love of God in your heart.

CONCLUSION: This year we must continue moving toward the CITY of GOD in our own time and place, the City of New Orleans. We must not be discouraged by setbacks.

Some of you remember me praying publicly for the public schools in Orleans Parish. We prayed almost in despair, knowing that nothing had changed substantially for many years.

Now, however, we are engaged in building public schools in a new way. We have created a Ninth Ward Community Charter School Association for the purpose of influencing and developing education in our city.

God can bring about his purposes in the earth. We must seize the day, hear the voice of God, and move through the open doors.