

Sermon Series: The Big Picture

Sermon title: Promise

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3

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In **Genesis 1 & 2** the Creator God makes everything out of nothing. He creates man and woman. They are made in his likeness to rule over creation under God. They are to multiply and fill the earth and are to display God's glory to all creation. They lived under God's rule and so experienced God's blessing as God's people and God gave them a wonderful place to live and provided for them.

But in **Genesis 3**, when Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent, they refused to live under God's rule. They ignored God's word and didn't trust in God's goodness. As a consequence of their sin, instead of living in the blessing of God they and the entire human race became cursed and exiled from God's presence.

The kingdom that God had established has now perished. But we saw a glimmer of hope in **Genesis 3:15**. God said a man would be born of the woman, who would triumph over the serpent by crushing his head. That's the first promise of a chosen one.

Well, Eve gives birth to a son named Cain and then a son named Abel. Maybe one of these would be the chosen one.

Tragically, although ‘the LORD had regard for Able”, his brother Cain murdered him. The very first child born in the world murders the second. Not a great start.

Our race became so corrupt that the LORD says this in **Genesis 6:5-8**,

“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

God decided to wipe the whole world out in a great flood in **Genesis 6-9....But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.”**

So, God hits the restart button with a man named Noah. Perhaps he will be the one who will live fully under God’s rule and blessing. But we find that it’s not Noah and the generations after him also refuse to live under God’s rule.

In **Genesis 11** we have the multitudes building a tower in Babel to **“make a name for themselves lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”** But they weren’t to make a name for themselves. They were to reflect and glorify the name of their creator to all

creation and 'fill the earth'. So, God confounds their plans to *'make a name for themselves'* and instead says he will make a name (*Shem* means name in Hebrew) for himself through the line of Shem, Noah's oldest son.

Genesis 1-11 is the introduction to the Bible. It covers a long time and when we get to **Genesis 12** the story hits the slow motion button here. The story that begins in **Genesis 12** runs all the way to **Revelation** and then we get the conclusion of the Bible.

What is God doing from Genesis 12 to Revelation?

Out of sheer mercy and grace, God purposes and promises to save people from every ethnic group in the world.

It begins with a promise to a man named Abram. Turn to **Genesis 12:1-2** and let's read the promise of God to Abram.

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your land and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

What does God promise Abram in these verses?

1. God promises Abram a place; a land.
2. God promises Abram a nation (later nations).
3. God promises Abram blessing and blessing through him.

It's important to note before we dive into each one of these that these promises echo what God told Adam and Noah before him.

God *blessed* them and said **“be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and have dominion over it.”**

(Genesis 1:28 & 9:1). And God will subsequently bless Issac, Jacob and Judah after him confirming the promises.

1. God promises Abram a land.

Which land does he promise him?

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”

The land he promises is the land of Canaan and the Canaanites are there.

So, we already have the beginning of obstacles to fulfilling the promises. It's not empty land. It's full of Canaanites.

But, it's God's land. He's the creator. He made it and he can give it to whomever he wishes.

So, he is giving Abram and his offspring this land.

But there's more than meets the eyes here. God is moving to reverse the curse. Adam was driven from the land God made for him because of his sin. Out of mercy and grace God is purposing and promising to bring Abram to the land where he originally placed Adam.

You cannot read the Bible from cover to cover and not see the importance of God giving a land. It is a central theme from Genesis to Revelation.

(see 12:7, 12:15, 12:17, 15:18, 17:8, 24:7)

2. God promises Abram a nation *and* nations.

“I will make of you a great nation.”

“In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

What astounding promises!

God will bless Abram in such a way that he becomes a people; a great nation. But not only will a great nation come from him, but this nation that comes from him will be a blessing that extends to all of the ethnic groups.

In chapter **13:14-17** we see both the land and a people promised again.

14 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, **15** for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. **16** I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. **17** Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.”

And again in **15:5** God tells him, “Look toward heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your offspring be.”

In **chapter 17:1-9** it is confirmed again, both land and a nation. In fact God gives him more detail each time. (see also 17:20, 22:17)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, 2 that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” 3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an *everlasting* covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an *everlasting* possession, and I will be their God.”

So, God promises him with a people; a nation. God promises him even a multitude of nations. His descendants will be like the sand and the stars. Even kings shall come from him!

But although God promises Abram a multitude of descendants, we find that his wife is barren. God gives to him the land of Canaan but it belongs to the Canaanites. God promises nations but his wife can't have a baby.

Those are huge obstacles.

So, the big question that we want to ask is this:

Can God be trusted to come through and keep his promises?

Thirdly,

3. God promises blessing and blessing through him.

In our main passage in **12:1-3**, the word bless or blessing appears 5x. God doesn't owe Abram blessing and favor.

We already mentioned 2 things, which are land and a nation. Then he mentions that he will have a great name. But why is God doing all of this?

What we see is that God has a purpose in blessing Abram. Do you see the words 'so that' in verse 2? God will bless him and make his name great for a purpose. What's the purpose? To be a blessing.

God tells Abram that he will **“bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you (later through your seed, your offspring) all the families of the earth will be blessed.”**

How will God fulfill such a promise to where people who embrace Abram will be embraced or people who reject Abram will be rejected?

How will God bless Abram and bless the world?

The key words are “in you” or “through you” in verse 3. And when we get to the New Testament we see just how blessed Abram was and just how much blessing comes through him.

What's the greatest blessing a person can receive?

Greater than any name he might have.

Greater than a land.

Greater than a nations coming from you.

Greater than even kings coming from you.

The greatest blessing is living in the presence of God.

From this one man he will raise up a physical nation (Israel) and give them a land.

And that nation will play a 'pivotal role' in blessing all of the ethnic groups of the world.

But everything hinges on this offspring or seed that is to come from the woman in **Genesis 3:15 and 12:7!**

Who is the offspring of Eve who will crush the serpent's head? Who will be the offspring of Abram who will bless all nations?

Who is the promised one?

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to his offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring", who is Christ.

God made a promise to Abraham 4000 years ago. He has been keeping that promise and will keep it until the last day.

In Genesis 12, out of sheer mercy and grace, God purposes and promises to save people from every ethnic group in the world through an offspring of Abram.

They will be God's people....dwelling in his presence..in the place he has for them...under his loving rule forever and ever.

We know this because we can read about the end of the story. Genesis 12 is fulfilled in Revelation 7:9-17.

Jesus Christ is the son of Abraham who perfectly lived under God's rule. He is the one who became a

curse by dying the cross to remove sin and he rose from the dead. He gives the blessing of God and the right to become children of God to all who believe in him. And for all who believe in him, he will one day take to live with him in his land.

You know this promise that God made...to redeem mankind...if he can do that, can't he also be trusted to fulfill all his other promises?

You can trust him follow through on his promises!

The eyes of the LORD roam to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support to those whose hearts are blameless toward him. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7)

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you. (Psalm 84:11)