

SERMON GUIDE

Genesis: God's Plan to Bless the World

Genesis 12:1-9



1.28.2024

SERMON NOTES:

The Bible is a library containing 66 books, written by 40 different human authors, over the span of 1500 years in three different continents. These books are as diverse as the men who wrote them. There are historical accounts like Genesis. Poetry like Psalms. Wisdom literature such as Proverbs and Job. There are prophecies, allegories, gospels, and letters.

And yet with all its diversity, Scripture has One single author—God Himself—making the Bible one unifying story recounting the redemptive work of God from Genesis to Revelation. When thinking about this salvation narrative, it's helpful to view the Bible in six redemptive acts.

Act 1—Creation: The Lord God creates the Heavens and the Earth and everything within them as a display of His goodness and power. He fashions man in His image and likeness to portray His glory to the rest of Creation. All that our Creator designed was good, but it doesn't take long before we get to act 2.

Act 2—The Fall: The first man and woman whom God placed in the garden are deceived by an enemy and rebel against the One who made them by eating from the forbidden tree. In response, the Lord pronounced a curse upon all of creation and mankind was cast out of the presence of God. But that isn't the end of the story. This brings us to Act 3.

Act 3—The Establishment of Israel: God calls a man named Abraham out of paganism and promises to make him into a great nation, to give him a land to dwell in, and that through this one man the whole world would be blessed. From Genesis 12-to the last book of the OT—the book of Malachi—we read about God's dealings with His rebellious people, Israel, as He gave them His law, raised up kings and sent them prophets.

Act 4—Jesus: And then we come to the most important part of the story—the coming of the Messiah. Israel's long-awaited Savior arrives in Jesus of Nazareth—God in the flesh—who lived, died, and was raised to new life for His people. He is the better Adam and the true Israelite who has restored the image of God in His newly redeemed people.

Act 5—The Church: The church is the commission of the New Israel encompassing both Jew and Gentile. The true children of Abraham are the loyal followers of Christ. The church's mission is to take the gospel to the nations and make disciples of Jesus.

Acts 6—Restoration: This is what awaits us—the New Heavens and New Earth. Jesus will return and restore all of Creation. Sin and death will be no more, and God will finally and forever dwell His people in His kingdom on earth.

This six-act overview helps us as we get back into our study in the book of Genesis, because the passage we're diving into this morning is massive. It's the call of Abraham in Genesis 12. And it's the beginning of act 3—the establishment of Israel. The nation of Israel is built on this passage, and, frankly, so is much of the Bible.

Genesis 12 describes God's call and covenant with Abraham, and this covenant is an everlasting covenant that finds its ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and it even extends into Act 6—the New Heavens and New Earth. So, it would not be an understatement to say, the passage we're studying this morning is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible.

We left off last time at the Tower of Babel. After the first man and woman's sin, the earth was populated with the sinful offspring of Adam. Due to man's wickedness, the Lord destroyed earth's inhabitants in a global flood. But He spared Noah and His family. Through Noah God re-commissioned mankind to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. But instead, we gathered in one location and erected a monument to our own glory—The Tower of Babel. God responded by confusing their language and dispersing man throughout the earth.

That brings us to the beginning of act 3—the call of Abraham and the promises of God. As I mentioned, the Abrahamic Covenant is one of the most important passages in the Bible. To give you a framework to understand the Abrahamic Covenant, I want you to think of it as two parallel lines. In this covenant, God promises three basic things 1) God will make Abraham's offspring into a great nation. 2) He is giving them a land. 3) He will bless the whole world through Abraham's lineage. And what we will see is that these promises have both a literal and spiritual fulfillment. And I hope to show you that as we dive into the text.

Point #1-The Call of God (V1)

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred (relatives) and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

The first thing to notice is that God is the initiator of this covenant. Abraham was not looking for God. God sought out Abraham. Abraham was an idolatrous pagan who worshiped the moon god in the land of UR. Like Noah before him, nothing in Abraham merited the favor of God. This call is purely by grace. Now, you might not realize this, but this is not the first time God told Abraham to leave. At this point, Abraham is living in a city called Haran. We know this from Genesis 11:31-32. But in Acts 7, Stephen gives us Israel's history beginning with Abraham, and he said, *"The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia (Ur), before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.'* 4 *Then he went out*

from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.” So, God called Abraham to go to the land of Canaan (which would become Israel), but he only went part way. God then came back a second time and told Abraham again to go, and Abraham obeyed.

This is significant because:

God is not going to accept partial obedience. When the Lord calls us into His service, we must be fully invested.

There will be obstacles in your journey of faith. For one reason or another, Abraham stopped on His way to the promised land. Something prevented him. Whether that was his own fear or external pressures, something hindered his walk with God.

But God’s call is irrevocable. Abraham must leave his family and the comforts of his home and go where God called him to be.

The vision of our Arise Campaign is “Build Up, Send Out.” We desire to train and send out Christians to the nations, to other local churches, and into their communities for the sake of the gospel. Our church has the responsibility to disciple and lead you in that direction, but at the end of the day, you must be like Abraham and answer the call to go. Will you answer God’s call? Is He calling to the nations or to a replant? Is He calling you to leave the comforts of TJC for a place He will show you?

That’s God’s call for Abraham—leave your homeland and go to the land I will show you. Now, we come to the promises of God.

Point#2-The Promises of God (VS2-3)

2 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. 3 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.”

There are six aspects to God’s promises to Abraham. This is where I want you to use that framework we discussed earlier. Each promise has a literal fulfillment and a spiritual fulfillment. Let’s look at them one at a time.

Promise #1-National Greatness

“And I will make of you a great nation.”

Temporal Fulfillment: God promises to make Abraham into a great nation. This has a lot of implications. Nations have governments, people, and a land. And that's exactly what God did through Abraham. His descendants became as numerous as the sand on the seashore. He established His rule over the Jews by giving them His law through Moses, and they inherited the promised land through Joshua. But because of Israel's rejection of Jesus—their Messiah—the Jewish people have broken this covenant and forfeited the promises. To this day, Abraham's offspring are in exile from the land and under the judgment of God.

Eternal Fulfillment: But this does not make the promises of God null and void. In Genesis 17, God tells Abraham this is an everlasting covenant—meaning, God will ensure its fulfillment. And the Lord has done just that by reconstituting His people through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the offspring of Abraham. He is the true Israelite. All the promises of God find their yes and amen in Him. And now the true children of Abraham are those who have faith in Christ Jesus. Paul told the Galatians that *“It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham”* (3:8), and *“if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise”* (3:28). The church is the true children of Abraham, heirs of the promise.

And we will inherit the promised land in the New Heavens and New Earth when Christ returns to reign. Even Abraham knew the land he would enter would be more than a physical location on earth. Listen to Hebrews 11:8, *“By faith [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”*

Promise #2-Divine Blessings

“I will bless you.”

Temporal Fulfillment: God blessed Abraham immensely. He was wealthy. He had a large family, and the Lord gave him many years of life. By all earthly standards, he was blessed.

Eternal Fulfillment: But spiritually, Abraham was blessed beyond measure because he was a friend of God. Abraham believed God's promises and it was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham was blessed with salvation and the promise of eternal life.

And we, who are the children of Abraham, are just as blessed. Paul told the Ephesians that God *“has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 1:3).

Promise #3-Personal Greatness

“I will...make your name great.”

Temporal Fulfillment: Abraham is arguably the most important biblical character, apart from Jesus. He is the father of the Jewish nation. Even among Jews and Muslims today, Abraham is regarded as a prominent figure.

Eternal Fulfillment: Abraham is great because he is the man of faith. Paul uses Abraham as the example of one who trusted God. In the same way, James uses Abraham as a man whose faith led to obedience and good works.

Blessed to be a blessing

Abraham was blessed immensely by God. Did you notice why? End of verse 3, *“so that you will be a blessing.”* I am going to bless you, Abraham, so that you will be a blessing to others. Christians, that’s why God has blessed you; so that can be a blessing to those around you.

Promise #4-Conduit of Blessings

“I will bless those who bless you.”

Temporal Fulfillment: I am for you, Abraham. And whoever is on your side, I will bless. There’s a great example of this in Genesis 20. Abraham comes to the place of King Abimelech who was going to take Abraham’s wife, Sarah. But God appeared to him in a dream and warned him not to do that. In the end, Abimelech not only returned Sarah, but also gave Abraham servants and livestock. Abraham prayed for Abimelech and God healed his household of barrenness. God blessed the one who blessed Abraham.

Eternal Fulfillment: Today we bless Abraham by imitating his faith, by trusting his God. God blesses us by His grace with all the spiritual blessings in Christ.

Promise #5-Conduit of Curses

“him who dishonors I will curse.”

Temporal Fulfillment: Just as God will bless those who bless Abraham, He will also curse the one who dishonors His servant. We’re going to see an example of this next week when Pharaoh takes Abraham’s wife to be his own, and in response God afflicted Pharaoh and his household with plagues. God cursed the one who dishonored Abraham.

Eternal Fulfillment: Spiritually speaking, the one who rejects the God of Abraham, and does not model his faith, is eternally condemned. In John chapter 8, Jesus was in a heated conversation with the Jews, and He said, *“I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”* They answered him, *“Abraham is our father.”* Jesus said to them, *“If you were Abraham’s*

children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.”

Promise #6-Global Blessings

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

Temporal Fulfillment: Abraham’s offspring, the nation of Israel, was to be a light to the nations. As God’s holy people, they were to the point the surrounding countries to the One true God and the proper worship of Yahweh.

Eternal Fulfillment: This promise is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the true offspring of Abraham. Paul cites this promise in Galatians 3 saying, *“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”* Paul said this last promise in verse 3 is the gospel, and God is the preacher. All the families of the earth will be blessed because from Abraham would come our Savior, Jesus Christ. And His gospel will go to the nations as the church carries out the great commission.

The ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant is on full display in Revelation 7 when people from every tribe, tongue and nation are standing around the throne worshiping the lamb who was slain.

What we’re going to see now is Abraham’s response to God’s promises and call. And there is much to learn for our own discipleship.

Point #3-Abraham’s Obedience (VS4-9)

#1-Faith is demonstrated through obedience.

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.

Abraham responds to the command of God, and he goes. He gathers his family at the ripe age of 75 and journeys to the land of Canaan.

What I want you to see is that by leaving his home and going to a foreign land, Abraham is demonstrating faith by obedience. Hebrews 11:8 says, *“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”*

Faith is manifested through obedience. We prove our faith by our actions, not merely by our words.

Abraham also shows us that God's plans are revealed as we take the next step of obedience. God did not tell Abraham everything he wanted to know. What's the land like? Where will we live? What are we supposed to do there? Pretty important questions. But God says go and I will show you. Most of the time, we must take a step of faith and then God will reveal next steps. It's not the other way around, even though we wish it were.

#2-Faith may lead us into dangerous situations (VS5&6)

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.

The Lord promised to give Abraham and his descendants this land, but when they arrived, the land was already inhabited. The Canaanites were there. And I am pretty sure, they aren't going to just give up their land to Abraham. These are hostile people. On several occasions, Abraham, Sarah and Lot find themselves in some very dangerous situations.

Yet, the entire time, they were in the will of God. God's will may not always make sense or be safe according to worldly standards, but I can assure you the safest place to be is in the will of God. Better to be in the midst of the storm knowing you're pleasing the Lord than to enjoy the comforts of the world.

#3-Faith leads us to worship (V7)

7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Pastor Brett always says, "*worship is a response to truth.*" Once Abraham arrives at the land Canaan, God re-affirms His promise that the land he is now standing in will be his possession.

In response to this truth, he built an altar and worshiped the Lord. He doesn't adopt the religions around him or use an existing place of worship. He makes his own shrine to the Lord whom He has trusted by faith.

Faith leads us to worship because faith lays hold of the beauty and worth of God. By faith, we see Him as incomparably glorious and worthy of our praise. Worship is the outworking of faith, and the result of a heart that has been filled by God's grace and love.

#4-Faith is required for the journey.

8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. 9 And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

Abraham never found a permanent resting place in the land of Canaan. The only piece of property he owned was his and Sarah's grave. He was sojourner all his days. A sojourner is a pilgrim—one is passing through and journeying to his homeland.

Hebrews 11:9, By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God...13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."

Abraham was a stranger in the land, but he was journeying to his ultimate destination which is by God's side in heaven. Christians, this is not our home. Our citizenship is in Heaven and from there we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We travel this pilgrimage by faith. On this journey there will be many challenges and setbacks. We will have trouble and even persecutions. But by faith we will cross the river.

But you must have faith. To receive the blessings of Abraham, you must have the faith of Abraham. Abraham believed the promises of God. He believed the word of the Lord. It's that simple. That's what saving faith is—believing the promises of God revealed in His word.

Friends, God's promises to you are so much better than what He made to Abraham. Jesus said, "*Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.*" But he only saw it in glimpses...in types and shadows. We see with eyes wide open. God has revealed Himself and His saving grace in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God's Son, who took on flesh, lived, died, and rose again for everyone who will turn from their sins and place their trust in Him. Jesus has been exalted to Heaven where He sits at the right hand God almighty. From there He will return in judgment and salvation to restore His Kingdom.

God's promise to you and me today is that if you have the same faith as Abraham, you will inherit all these promises.

LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

BUILD UP

● REVIEW:

- Read Matthew 6:9-13 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
- What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
- Additional Scripture:
 - Psalm 96:3
 - John 14:6
 - Acts 1:8
 - Romans 10:13-14
 - Genesis 17:1-8
 - Hebrews 11:8
 - Ephesians 1:3
 - Romans 4:16
 - Genesis 20:17-18
 - Galatians 3:15-18

● REFLECT:

- Why did God have to call Abraham a second time?
- Why did God call Abraham?
- Discuss the temporal and eternal fulfillment of the six aspects of God's promise to Abraham.
- Who is doing all the work for Abraham to be a blessing?
- How did Abraham display his faith through his obedience?

● RESPOND:

- Where is God calling you?
- What is holding you back from responding with obedience through faith?

● MEDITATE:

- Genesis 12:2-3 -- *2 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. 3 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.”

- **MEMORIZE:**

- Psalm 96:3 -- *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*

SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**

- Pray over any request from your group members.
- Lead Ministry Assistant - **Becca Depolitte**
- Ministry - **Students**
- **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
- **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Meo (Hindu traditions) in India



- **Population in country:** 319,000
- **Global population:** 325,600
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
- **Evangelical:** 0.00%
- **Primary Religion:** Hinduism
- **Primary Language:** Hindi
- **Summary:** In some ways, the Meo are like the chameleon native to India; they blend in. They speak the local language and mix Hindu rites of passage with Muslim ones. Their customs vary depending upon where they live, and they

sometimes face efforts by Hindus to make them return to the Hindu religious system.

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray that the church in their localities would reach out to the Meo. Pray that the Meo would not let their syncretism get in the way of a clear understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>