

THE COVENANT MAKING GOD

Genesis 12

The introduction of the Abrahamic Covenant serves as a key turning point in human history. We see God's plan for the redemption of the world.

God makes a world-changing promise to Abram

God's choosing of Abram is a free act of His grace. This resembles God's election of Noah who "found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6.8). Scripture echoes this theme again in God's choosing of Israel (Deuteronomy 7.7-8). This anticipates the gospel message of God's gracious salvation through Christ (Ephesians 2.8-9).

God makes a unilateral promise. It is initiated by God alone and Abram makes no promises in return.

The promise is unconditional. God will bring it to pass no matter what.

There is a promise of a place - a physical location where God's people will dwell. God acts in a world of real people and objects.

There is a promise of a people - "a great nation" will emerge from Abram's offspring.

God promises to "make [Abram's] name great" - this is against the people trying to make a name for themselves (Cf. Genesis 11.4).

There is a promise of blessing - Abram's offspring will have a special relationship with God.

God promises to curse those who oppose His people (Cf. Deuteronomy 28). We see this as early as Genesis 12.17.

Through God's people, all nations will be blessed - God's design is for global impact.

Abram displays a mix of good and bad traits

Abram, like most people, shows a blend of good and bad qualities. Abram obeys God by leaving his country (Genesis 12.4). He obeys despite his wife's infertility and later, when the promised land was occupied by the Canaanites (Genesis 11.30, 12.6-7).

Abram is influenced by fear (Genesis 12.12). His obedience becomes tarnished by an act of deception. In a theme that will recur among the patriarchs, Abram tries to help God along with His plan.

Abram tells his wife to lie. He places Sarai in a terrible position. Abram forces his wife to face the consequences so long as he survives (Genesis 12.13).

The episode of Abram's lying to Pharaoh reinforces the fact that he did not earn God's election. He was a flawed man tempted by the pressures in this life. God uses sinful strugglers.

Lying will have consequences (Genesis 12.17-20). Sin is never the means to get things accomplished.

Christians should be able to see the good and the bad in people. We live in a time when we subject others to "purity tests". A sound biblical anthropology will allow us to be gracious.

The church inherits the promise to Abram

The Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled initially by Israel and eventually by the Church (Psalm 105.6; John 8.39). There are many references to Abram throughout the Bible.

"Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles [nations] by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying 'in you shall all the nations be blessed'" (Galatians 3.7-8).

Those of us who have put our faith in Jesus, are inheritors of the promise God made to Abraham. We are destined for a place of blessing made up of people from all nations.

Key Idea: In Christ, we are members of the great family of God so that we might bless the nations.

Application Questions:

What is the relationship between God's promise and God's commands? How does this shed light on how we should live as Christ followers?

What can we learn from this passage about the nature of fear? How does it impact Abram? How could he have responded differently while in Egypt?

How does this passage inform the Great Commission of Matthew 28.18-20?