

God's Promises to Abram

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Genesis 12 is a turning point. Up to this point, Genesis has dealt with all humanity and the problem of sin. We have seen God's punishment and His grace in dealing with mankind: The Fall of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, The Flood, the Tower of Babel. And now the focus narrows down to one man, the nation that will come from him, and God's solution to the problem of sin.

Genesis 12:1-3 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Chapter 11 of Genesis traces the descendants of Shem, Noah's son, down to Terah, who was the father of Abram. The last part of Chapter 11 tells us that Terah was from Ur, but that he took his family and ***together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.*** They went from Ur, which would be modern day Iraq, and traveled northwest along the Euphrates river along a trade route. They stopped in Haran, which would be modern day Syria. God was calling Abram to leave his settled existence and go somewhere he did not know. God simply said, "Trust me." He was told to trust the promises God made, and in return he would get blessings from God.

Abram did what God told him to do in response to the promise God made. He acted in faith. But that is not the main point of all this. The main point is not the faithfulness of Abram, but the faithfulness of God. After all, God is the one making the promises here. So let's consider the promises of God here, breaking it down into seven parts. It goes from promises for Abram personally, then extending from him to others, and eventually to all humankind. These promises are still being fulfilled today.

1. ***I will make you into a great nation.*** A great nation! This was spoken to an old man who had no children. Yet God was true to His Word, first by giving Him Isaac, who had Jacob and Esau. Through Jacob's line came twelve sons, the tribes of Israel, which grew into a mighty nation. Israel has become the "holy nation" of God, the church. All those who put their confidence in Jesus as Lord and Savior are part of Israel, that great nation spanning the globe, two billion strong.

2. ***and I will bless you.*** I will bless you. God did not say, "Because you are such a great guy, Abraham, I will be nice to you." No, He simply said, I will bless you. It has its origin in God, coming from His grace and mercy and love. God looked with favor on Abraham.
3. ***I will make your name great*** Abraham was the first to be called a prophet in Scripture (Gen. 20:7) His name is revered not just by Jews and Christians, but by Muslims as well! Virtually everyone in the world has heard of Abraham. His name has been made great. And that name, originally Abram, meant "great father." God changed it to Abraham, which means "father of many." (Gen 17:5)
4. ***and You will be a blessing*** The reason God was blessing Abraham was to use him as an instrument to bless others. It was not something that was to be limited to Abraham. The blessing would extend from Him to those all around him, and eventually to all people.
5. ***I will bless those who bless you*** This part of the promise was not speaking only of Abraham, but of his descendants, too. Certainly those who treated Abraham with favor were smiled upon by God. And those who would bless his offspring would also be blessed. Take for example Rahab, the harlot or prostitute in Joshua 6:25. When the descendants of Abraham were taking possession of the land God promised to them, she assisted them, and her family was spared the destruction that fell upon those who resisted. Not only was she spared, but she was the mother of Boaz, the father of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David. She was blessed in that her great-great-grandson became King of Israel, and was the one through whom the promise of a Savior would be fulfilled.
6. ***I will curse those who curse you*** All those who have cursed God's people have met this fate: Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Philistines, Romans. The enemies of God and His Church may appear to be thriving at times, but rest assured that God is in control. He will mete out His righteous judgment.
7. ***And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*** Establishment of a great nation through Abraham was not the end in itself. It was the means to accomplish something even greater: the redemption of all creation, the salvation of all people. It was through Abraham and his descendants that God would bring to this earth the promise of the ages, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. The Messiah came through Abraham for the benefit of the entire world. The one who called Abraham his "father" was God's own Son, who would make payment for the sin of the world with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

This blessing God gave to Abraham continues to be fulfilled in all its aspects today. God continues to graciously choose people who don't deserve choosing, like us! We have been made part of His great, holy nation.

Can believe a promise? It depends upon who is making the promise, doesn't it? What about the promises God makes in His Word? All of the Scripture readings today have to do with promises that God made. God makes a promise here to Abram, and he reiterates that promise throughout the following chapters. When Abram was afraid that the only heir would be his servant Eliezer, God reaffirms the promise by saying: *"Look up at the heavens and count the stars-- if indeed you can count them ... So shall your offspring be."* (Genesis 15:5)

Abram would still have his doubts, yet God would remain faithful to that promise. The promise was good, whether Abram believed it or not. Abraham did believe, and the next verse in Genesis 15, a passage quoted several times in the New Testament, tells us that *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.* Faith in God's promise made him righteous. That faith is described in the book of Hebrews.

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 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 the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. ● And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. (Hebrews 11:8-12)

Taking God's promises to heart, believing they are true, is what faith is all about. Don't put your faith in people or things. **Put your faith in God. People will disappoint you. God will not.** He kept his promises to Abraham, which resulted in the Savior for all people coming to this earth, taking all sin on Himself, and paying the cost to redeem us. In Jesus, you have forgiveness of sins and the certainty of eternal life. Because of His death in your place, all your sins have been paid for. You don't have to worry. You are forgiven. You have eternal life. That is God's promise to you in Christ.