

CGYG / LIFE Bible Study Series 2006-07: Genesis

Genesis 12 – Jesus Christ: Fulfillment of God’s Blessing through Abraham

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Many Christians today wrongly de-emphasize the importance of the Old Testament, and many churches in North America have seemed to altogether throw out the Old Testament from their pulpits and Sunday school classes. In its place has come superficial preaching and teaching, cursory glances at parts of the New Testament (which, they say, are more ‘relevant’ to the times), or topical studies where the focus is not on Christ, but on what the Bible means ‘to me’ and how its moral and ethical teachings can apply to ‘my’ life. But Christianity is **all** about the person of Jesus Christ – who He was (and is), what He did (and continues to do) and what He taught (and still teaches us through His Word today). But the truth of Christ lies not only in the New Testament. The entire Old Testament, as well, was written to point sinners to Jesus Christ – the great Redeemer whom God would send to take away the sin of the world. In Genesis 12 we see the beginning of how God was going bring forth this Messiah, through one man Abram (whom God would later rename Abraham) and his descendants.

Read Genesis 12:1-9

1. What were God’s promises to Abraham as He called him to leave his familiar surroundings and journey out? How did God’s personal promises of blessing to Abraham play out in his life (e.g. 15:1-5; 17:3-9; 21:1-2; 25: 7-8)?
 - Personal blessing: “...I will bless you” and “...I will make your name great...”
 - Universal blessing: “...you will be a blessing...”, “...**all the peoples on earth** will be blessed through you.”
 - 15:1-5 → God Himself would be his shield and his ‘very great reward’; God promises to bring about an heir of Abram’s own flesh, despite his age (v.4); God promises that through this heir would come multiple generations of descendants (v.5)
 - 17:3-8 → God promises to make Abram very fruitful, even renaming him Abraham (father of many); not only people, but **nations** and **kings** will come from him; God’s covenant would be with him and generations to come... God would be their God; God would give the land of Canaan ‘as an everlasting possession’ to him and his descendants
 - 21:1-2 → Isaac was born to Sarah & Abraham, just as God had promised...
 - 25:7-8 → Abraham lived 175 years “...and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years...” → God granted him a full life

2. What further promise does God make to Abraham in the final part of verse 3? From the follow Scriptures, how would God one day bring about blessing to every nation through Abraham?
 - Matthew 1:1-17 → Through Abram would come Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the both Jews & Gentiles
 - Acts 3:17-26 → God raised up His servant (Jesus Christ), who came through Abraham; He went first to the Jews
 - Galatians 3:7-9 → Those who believe are children of Abraham – i.e. children of blessing (NOT necessarily physical descendants of Abraham, but those who believe); God would justify (‘declare righteous’) the Gentiles by faith... He ‘announced the Gospel’ to Abraham by saying, ‘ all the nations will be blessed through you.’; v.9 those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham
 - Galatians 3:14-16 (also Gen 22:18) → this passage refers back to Genesis 12:7 (NIV: “To your offspring...” or “to your seed”, not ‘seeds’); Paul argues that the Lord here is promising Abraham ‘...one person, who is Christ.’ (v. 16); Gen 22:18 → ‘...through your offspring (or seed), all nations on earth will be blessed’

3. On what basis does the Bible say that Abraham and his offspring received God’s promise (Romans 4:13-17)? How does this still apply to those who would call themselves Christians today (Galatians 3:26-29)?
 - Rom 4:13-17 → It was by faith that Abraham ‘received the promise’, not by works that could earn God’s blessing
 - If it were to be received by obeying the law, no-one would successfully receive the promise because ‘law brings wrath’ → those under the law remain under judgment of the law
 - Gal 3:26-29 → Today, we are Christians by faith... and if we ‘belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs...’ → we’ve inherited the promising and blessing that God gave to Abraham

In His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12, God begins to reveal how He would fulfill the promise He made back in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 3:15. Because of Adam & Eve’s sin, creation was alienated (separated) from God, and cursed by God. Amidst judgment, however, God’s mercy was demonstrated in His promise that there would come an ‘offspring’ of the woman who would crush the head of Satan, defeating him and defeating sin. This promised offspring is Jesus Christ, the Saviour through whom God would restore all things back to glory, purge the land of sin, and restore all of humanity and all of creation.

4. Read John 8:31-41, 48-59. In Jesus' time, how did the Jews view Abraham and what were their attitudes as they appealed to his authority? In what way did they mistake the meaning of God's covenant with Abraham, and how did Jesus rebuke them? What did Jesus point out about the object of Abraham's faith that the unbelieving Jews completely missed (v.56)? What remarkable claim was Jesus making in verse 58 (c.f. Exodus 3:14)?

- John 8:33 → the Jews were proud to be descendants of Abram, they appealed to him as their father
- They had a proud, arrogant attitude, believing that because they were blood descendants of Abram, they were automatically blessed
- V.39b → If the were Abraham's children, they would do the things that he did... what did he do? Abram 'rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad' (v.56)!
- The object of Abraham's faith was the Lord Jesus!
- V.58 → Jesus was referring to His divinity here... His eternal nature; the title of 'I AM' was reserved for God alone!

Jews, both historically and today, miss the point of God's promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12 because they believe that 1) God's blessing is reserved only for those who are physical descendants of Abraham – those coming out of the nation of Israel and 2) salvation or a right standing before God can be achieved by obeying the 'laws' that God had given Moses back in the Old Testament. Throughout history, God had revealed to them glimpses of the promise of a Saviour who was to come, through whom all people from all nations (not just Jewish) would receive salvation by *faith*, not through works of obedience. Yet they rejected this truth, choosing instead to cling on in vain to their identities as Jews – physical descendants of Abraham – to save them.

How would Christ be a blessing to people of all nations, and what would some of these blessings be?

5. Read Isaiah 53:3-12. Isaiah was written about 700 B.C., yet gives a vivid description of Jesus Christ, the promised Saviour who was to come through Abraham's lineage. As we've seen, the blessings through Christ would ultimately be extended not only to Jews, but to all other nations as well. These blessings would come at a great cost, however, because they could only come once sin was paid for, and God's judgment was satisfied. What would Christ have to endure, why would He need to endure this, and what blessings would there be for those who believed on Him?

What he would endure:

- He would be despised and rejected, and suffer (v.3)
- He took our sin and sorrow upon himself, he endured physical torture for our sin (v. 4-5)
- Ultimately, death (v.9)

Why he would endure it:

- We have all sinned (v.6), and sin needed to be paid for; Christ was made our guilt offering (v.10)

Blessings for those who believe:

- Peace and healing would be ours (v.5)
- Will be justified, or declared righteous (v.11)

6. As we studied at our retreat this year, there would be many more blessings that would come for those who set their eyes of faith on God, and the Saviour whom He would send. What are some of these great blessings (e.g. Jeremiah 31:33-34, Job 19:25-27, Isaiah 35:1-10)?

- Jer 31:34 → forgiveness of sins; will remember them no more; new Covenant with His people to be their God, to write his law in their minds & hearts, so they would obey Him; personal relationship with God
- Job 19:25-27 → hope of our own bodily resurrection, even after our bodies have experienced decay; hope of seeing God with our own eyes
- Isaiah 35:1-10 → redemption of Creation/nature – streams in the desert; wasteland will become a garden once again; glory restored; salvation by God (v.4); redemption of sinners, with purging of sin from the land (v.8-9); all will once again be holy; restoration of everlasting joy; banishment of sorrow & sighing

Taking every thought captive...

Throughout the Bible, we see God's blueprint of His salvation plan. Central to this plan is the person of Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son whom He would one day send to take on the form of a man; subjecting himself to temptation, yet remaining sinless (Heb 4:15), Christ would suffer and ultimately die on the cross to bear the burden of all of our sin. His resurrection three days later would prove Christ's victory over sin and death once and for all. Abraham looked forward to the day of Christ, and was glad (John 8:56). He understood that God's covenant with him extended beyond the immediate blessings of land, protection and descendants. God would ultimately use Abraham and Israel to bring forth Jesus Christ, and Christ would be the blessing to all nations. This was the hope that Abraham set his sight on. Let us take our example from him, and place our faith in Christ – both in what He did for us on the cross 2 millennia ago, but also looking forward to His imminent return.