

God's Covenants

The Covenant of Promise

Key idea:

God promised to bless Abram and his seed abundantly, and He called Abram and His seed to be a blessing to the whole world.

Key text:

Genesis 12:1–7

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.”

⁴ So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. ⁶ Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Key points:

1. The beginning of God’s covenant with Abram in Genesis 12 is one of the most important moments in Scripture and all of human history.
2. The central idea in God’s covenant with Abram is blessing. The word blessing, which only occurred 6 times in all of Genesis 1-11, occurs 5 times in Genesis 12:2-3!
3. There are four basic promised blessings in God’s covenant with Abram:
 - a. Posterity - a great nation/offspring (v2;7)
 - b. Provision - I will bless you (v2)
 - c. Prominence - I will make your name great (v2)

d. Protection - I will bless and curse (v3)

4. The promised blessings cover all of life, but according to Paul, the primary blessing is the Gospel of justification by faith alone (Galatians 3:8).
5. Abraham is told that he is being blessed so that he can be a blessing to the whole earth. He does not need to worry about opposition or scarcity, for God is His protection and source.
6. Christians are Abram's seed, and therefore we receive all the blessings given to him and are called to be a blessing to the world.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's text and teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. God commands Abram to "Get up and go!" from his family, his land, and everything he has known, and then promises to bless him. What is the relationship between Abram obeying the call to get up and go and his ability to receive the covenant blessings? Why would staying in Ur of the Chaldees prevent him from being open to receiving the covenant blessings? Can I think of anything that might prevent me from being in a place to fully receive God's blessings?
3. How does God communicate the importance of "blessing" in His covenant with Abram? What blessings are included in the covenant promises? How does "blessing" link the covenant with Abram with the covenants of creation (Adam) and preservation (Noah)?
4. How surprised was I to see Paul refer to this covenant as "the Gospel" in Galatians 3:8? What does this tell me about the relationship of the covenant with Abram and the covenant of redemption in Genesis 3:15?
5. Since Paul calls this covenant "the Gospel" in Galatians 3:8 and says that Jesus is the "Seed" to Whom God made the promises (Galatians 3:16), what can I learn about how to read the Scripture? What is the major plotline that Paul is expecting to see in the individual stories in Scripture? Who is the major Person in that plotline?
6. How is Abram commanded to respond to the covenant blessings promised to him? Is he simply to enjoy and consume them on himself? Is God's purpose just to bless Abram, or is there a greater end in mind?

7. Why is the idea of “blessed to be a blessing” foundational to a biblically shaped life? Is it possible to experience and enjoy God’s blessings without being a blessing to others? Why or why not?
8. Since Christians are now the seed of Abram and therefore heirs of all the promises made to him (Galatians 3:29), how does the idea of “blessed to be a blessing” apply to us? How are we to be blessings to the whole world?
9. Can I think of any area where I need to meditate on God’s promised blessings to me? Can I think of any area where I am being called to be a blessing to others?
10. Whom can I pray for, share what I have learned, and invite to church this week?

Preview of next week: Embracing the Covenant Promise by Faith (Genesis 15)