

Long before cathedrals and kingdoms, even before cities and calendars, the sons of Adam were waiting for a deliverer to rescue them from Eden's exile. They knew that they needed a rescuer. They knew the promise, an offspring of Eve would crush the serpent's head, but Abel was killed and Cain was banished. Beauty didn't mark out a single generation before death and dysfunction found the first family. Darkness overshadowed the glories of exploration and exhaustion exemplified the fruitless gloom of the now dangerous night. Generation after generation awaited this promised seed.

This is the story of God's dealing with Man. It is a story of a God who interjects Himself onto His pages to befriend those whom He chooses, to tell His story in chapters heavy with tension and promise through characters flawed and faithful. Our story today picks up at Eden's gate and moves to the progenitor of the nation of Israel, from the garden to a boat to a calling. Let's follow the timeline of the beginning, the genesis, of God's grand and glorious story of His Son, about His Son, and for His Son.

I am going to quickly summarize chapters 5-11 of the book of Genesis in this story of God's Son. You can read the original later. ☺ God continues to give Mankind attempts to entrust themselves to Him, but they continue to resist Him and trust themselves. The same fall goes on over and over again, even when God rescues, the need for the Promised Seed is evident.

1. Genesis 5: Mankind, Attempt #1 - Adam
  - a. Descendants from Adam from the Fall to Noah
  - b. Refrain, "This guy fathered this other guy, had other sons and daughters, and he lived so many years...and he died"
    - i. and he died, and he died, and he died
    - ii. Curse, curse, curse, reminder, reminder, reminder
    - iii. Not the seed, not the seed, not the seed
  - c. Noah born to Lamech with the hope:
    - i. "This one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed."
      1. What was the cause? The ground?
      2. Lamech lost sight of the real problem
2. Genesis 6-8: Mankind, Attempt #2 - Noah
  - a. Thus Noah was seen as the hope of the Seed of Eve to crush the serpent's head, but we see that humanity (Lamech's words) were still blaming someone else and had

become so evil in the days of Noah that God wiped them from the earth, except Noah and his family

- i. "Everything on earth will die. But, I will establish my covenant with you."
- b. God judges the wickedness of humanity by the awesome destruction of the floodwaters
- c. See the pattern:
  - i. Creation began out of the chaos of the waters (Gen 1) and now God returns the world to chaos of waters
  - ii. Recreation through Noah would come out of the chaos of the waters
- d. God rescues Noah from the judgment, because "He graced Noah in His sight"
- e. God promises never to curse the ground again, even though Man is evil from birth
- f. Yet, Noah was not the seed of Eve, for sin will follow Noah, too

### 3. Genesis 9

- a. God commands blood payment for every life taken *for God made Man in His image*
  - i. There is a reminder of Man's purpose as Image-bearer
  - ii. This is a deliberate correlative command in regards to Cain and Abel
  - iii. Is the Noah the "new Adam?"
- b. God confirms His covenant with Noah and his descendants that he will not destroy the earth by flood
  - i. He gives the sign of the Bow (battle bow, not pretty tied up bow), drawn back to fling death as the sign of His judgment and of His covenant
  - ii. The Battle Bow drawn back is the symbol of God's mercy, and we know that we receive mercy because Jesus was pierced by the arrow of God's judgment in our place
- c. Noah is not the Promised Seed, for his story ends in shame and nakedness, just like Adam's
  - i. See the consistent picture: Like Adam, Like Noah
    1. Creation/Recreation: God created from the chaos of the waters and God recreated humanity through the chaos of the waters in the flood
    2. Shame of nakedness is the sign of sin's presence in the garden and shame of nakedness is the sign of the presence of sin in Noah's family
    3. Eden ends with a curse, Noah's story ends with a curse
  - ii. Thus we see that Noah is a remnant of Adam, receiving the mercy of God, but that his blamelessness is not enough to crush the serpent's head...there will be a greater One

### 4. Genesis 10-11: Mankind, Attempt #3 - Babel

- a. Humanity spreads out to multiply and fill the earth as God commanded, but it doesn't last
  - i. Rather than depend upon God, humanity still bears the image of Adam, the curse of that original sin still in its veins
- b. Humanity forgot God and came together to "build a great name for ourselves, or else we will be scattered"
  - i. Thus, in seeking a great name and a powerful unity to ascend to God, humanity was judged unworthy of either.
- c. God scattered Man by scattering his languages, another curse for a different sin

Thus we see that God's judgments and mercy were spurned by Man time and again as Mankind sought to make a name for itself and place itself in position of self-rule that can only rightly and goodly be occupied by God

We forgot the curse from Eden and persisted in the arrogance of sin

We forgot the curse of the flood and persisted in our wicked violence

We forgot the curse of Babel and persisted in our foolish self-exalted mutiny of the only good and glorious God.

In such futility we arrive at Chapter 12: The choosing of the line of the Seed of Eve, which shall be for all peoples. It comes through Adam, the chosen progenitor, through Noah the elected remnant brought through the waters, and now through a Chaldean from Ur, a man renamed Abraham, for he would be the chosen father for a chosen people of a multitude of nations. In fact, Paul calls this promise "God proclaiming the gospel to Abraham" (Gal 3:8). So, we see here in Genesis 12 and 17 the gospel proclaimed again. First it was proclaimed to the Serpent, and here it is the gospel again proclaimed to Abraham, a new mystery proclaimed, that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through His Seed.

God announces that He is going to do something quite different, introducing a different kind of life from a different kind of work: the formation of a people that He calls to Himself and graciously chooses for Himself that they might know Him in a unique way and through whom the Great Rescuer would arrive. You see, it is about Jesus, not Abraham or Isaac or Jacob. It is about the Seed, whom the apostle Paul directly applies to Jesus in Galatians 3. God chose Abraham, not his brother, Nahor, to bring the chosen Seed. God chose Isaac, not Ishmael, to bring the chosen Seed, not because Ishmael was evil, but because God was bringing the Seed. God chose Jacob, not

Esau, not because Esau was evil, but because God was bringing the Seed through one line for the purpose of the whole world, not merely the sons of Jacob. This story is not about the ancient forefathers of Israel, or cursed Canaan's land, but it is about God's dealing with humanity through the most ancient one, His eternal Son, our Lord Jesus.

God would rescue this new nation, this new people, from the power of the devil and from the curse with which humanity was cursed, by a unique and God-persistent self-revelation of Himself by covenant, by promise. Just as God had covenanted to rescue Noah and his family, God would now covenant to a single man for the sake of all nations.

God is now moving forward with tenacity, not waiting, as it seemed before, but actively working to procure and preserve and protect for Himself a uniquely chosen people through Abraham's line. This choice of God, this election, is not particularly exclusive here, but is more about God reaching into history to benefit a world which has no intention of doing right at all. Humanity, thus, is shown by God in Genesis 1-11 to be highly resistant to righteousness and pervasively and persistently pursuant of self-serving wickedness. In words attributed to Rousseau, "God made man in His image, and Man, being a gentleman, returned the favor." Man reimaged God into Man's image, and it was from this culture of peoples scattered by God for such incredulous arrogance that He reached down in mercy to give a great promise of the promised Seed once again.

Through this pagan man in a pagan culture from a pagan family, Abraham, and through this uniquely chosen people God would bring the promised seed of Eve to bless all the nations of the earth.

When we read of the ancient saints, we must not merely look to them as examples or some kind of fable that modifies or instructs us on what to do or not to do behaviorally. But, rather, we must ask and keep asking these questions: Do you believe God and His promises, or am I

believing some other promiser, the Serpent's bold lie? Have we the same confidence and joy and experience of walking with God as Abraham? Are we living the same kind of life, the life of faith?

Now, I don't mean to sound like Abraham was perfect. He wasn't the seed, either. He doubted by obeying Sarah and trying to produce his promised heir by his own empowerment rather than God's. He fabricated a story that endangered and belittled his wife because he feared for his own life. He walked right through the land God had promised him in order to gain Egypt's bread. He wasn't the Seed and his faith wasn't perfect.

So, why are we talking about this Abraham, anyway? Haven't we moved on from the Old Testament? Isn't Abraham, faithful or not, as so distant in time and culture as to be fairly useless to us today? It is easy to look at these early chapters of Genesis and conclude that our lives are so different than this world inked in time long ago. But, we would be wrong in thinking that. Abraham's life was not really different than ours. Sure, technology is vastly different, but technology is not life! Their fears are our fears, their pursuits are our pursuits, and their desires are easily recognizable in the catacombs and revelations of our own. Life today is identical to life in the days of Abraham. How is this? Well, what is life? What is life, *really*? I would argue that the only difference between the age of Abraham and the age of today is simply the expediency and scale at which we do the things that they did.

Then they ate, they drank, they partied, they made love, they made war, they built wealth and lost wealth, they slept, they woke, they communicated, they dreamed. Yet, somehow we think ourselves superior to them because we do all these things faster and farther and more frequently? Sure, we might enjoy more diverse food and larger, softer beds and bigger, more extravagant parties. Our wealth is greater and our loss is greater, but in essence the gain and loss is of the same wealth. Our communication reaches farther and more frequently, but the content

of such messages are equally deep or superficial though it is up scaled. Our wars are greater and more destructive, covering thousands of miles and millions of lives, but the same desire for power and protection drive us as they did them. One might make the argument that we are the inferior for doing such things faster and farther, with greater lunacy and lesser humanity than even those nomads, but that is not true, either, for it is only a matter of quantity not of the essence of such things. The only thing that changes is our capacity for volume, but it is the same life merely scaled up. They lived life on foot and in stone and we live life on wheel and in plastic, but they are the same life lived.

What's the point? What humanity was trying to build in Babel is the same city that humanity is trying to build today. Global interconnectedness is leading us to a similar place of "trying to make a name for ourselves" apart from depending upon God. We strive and struggle to build a unity upon anything but submission to the Creator from whom flow all good things, and we are rushing headlong to destruction in our arrogance, defining and redefining good and evil, blessing and curse, righteous and unrighteous at such a reckless oscillation that truth and error are no longer categories that are divided but have become one and the same to the applause of Adam's kin.

At the same time, what Abraham needed and was given by God is what we still need and are given by God in His seed, Jesus Christ, the great covenant keeper and covenant receiver. The men of Babel built a city of Man and Abraham waited for the city of God, entrusting himself to God's promise rather than his own hands. Abraham was promised a sacred space for a sacred people under the sacred fellowship with God. You see, in Genesis 12 we find that God promised to Abraham exactly what the men of Babel were trying to build for themselves: a great name. But while the city of Man is built by the hands of men, the city of God is built by the infinitely wise

and powerful hands of God Himself and is only received by a promise, for a great name in the eyes of God is not produced, but given. And this gift of God is not given to those who trust their own strength and their own wisdom and their own fastidious efforts of the bricks of slogan or the mortar of this world, but rather to those like Abraham, the father of believers, who close to Him in humble dependence, that is repentant faith in Him who grants mercy unwarranted and grace to the powerless. It is God who provides the sacred space where His sacred people are blessed with every blessing of God in a uniquely sacred relationship with Himself.

God promises the blessing of Himself to this man, Abraham, and the promise of a restoration from the alienation of sin reaching all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Through Him God would bless the peoples of every nation, and all the earth would know God and God would dwell with them in a city, as a people, in a way much greater than He did Adam.

Yet, Abraham, though he was credited righteousness because of His faith, was not the Seed of Promise. It was promised to Him as something for which he must wait. It was anticipated, but it had not *adverted*. In fact, Abraham died in Egypt, not even in Canaan. He did not receive the blessings of the sacred space or see His sacred Seed in his own lifetime. He did not receive the blessings, as Hebrews 11 tells us, but “saw” the promises from far off, awaiting for the day of the coming Savior. Jesus revealed to us that He is Abraham’s longed-for Seed of Promise who receives all the blessings of God and wins and secures a sacred space, redeems and rescues a sacred people by his own blood and risen life, and pours out his sacred presence upon His people by sending His own Spirit. He is building a city where God will dwell with His people forever; these people who are not merely from Abraham’s bloodline, but are from every tribe, nation, people, language, unified through faith in One, Jesus Christ the Righteous Seed. This is what the

apostle Paul means when He calls the believers in Jesus, the Church, the Temple of God. The artifice of the Temple does not consist of stone or brick, but rather the dwelling place of God, the holiest of holies, consists in the presence of God in the midst of His people. It is the same with the city of God. The city of God is not brick or stone or wall, but it is His people in whom He dwells and among whom He dwells. Thus, when John describes the holy city in his revelation, the city has names written on it, the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles, and it is larger than anything imaginable and is a perfect cube with walls higher than 1300 miles. It is not a literal city, but a figurative image of the perfection of His people made holy by His sovereign work of redemption and sanctification. This is the future grace that the Spirit of God revealed to the apostle John in Revelation 5:9, 7:9-12, and 10:11ff where we told that people from every tongue and tribe and nation have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and purified by its cleansing power to worship Him forever and ever.

You see, it is only in Christ Jesus that we finally receive all the promises given to Abraham, for all the blessings promised to Abraham find their foci in Jesus Christ:

Eph 1:3 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."

2 Cor 1:20 - All the promises of God find their "yes" and "Amen!" in Him, as it is written: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."

Christ redeems us from the curse by becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13-14) so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles and so that all might receive the promised Spirit by faith.

The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham was fulfilled by Abraham's greatest grandson. In fact, Abraham is the lesser in the relationship, for Jesus is not the finisher of Abraham, the Omega Son,

if you will, but Jesus was the purpose of Abraham, and He was existent and promised before Terah was ever called out of Ur and Isaac was even a gleam in his ancient father's eye. Jesus is the Alpha, the beginning, the cause, the point of all of history. He is not merely the finisher of history, but He is the purpose of all of history! It has always been in Him and for Him and through Him, as it has been written, "'I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Rev 1:8)

And how is it that we receive the promises given to Abraham? It is through being united to Abraham's Seed by faith. It is this union with Christ – probably the greatest doctrine forgotten and ignored in the Church today: All that Christ has done and won is done and won by those who are united to Him. This is why the Revelation of John reveals that history is moving toward a wedding. A wedding! It is the union of Bride and Groom, in which all weddings and unions find their substance and their root, for this is the goal of history. By faith in Jesus Christ we are united to Him, like a Bride who gains all the honor and all the wealth and all the Life that her Groom possesses. We, the Church, are united to Christ by faith and thus receive all the promises of His obedience in this glorious union. He, the Groom, receives all the debts that His Bride has accrued and pays the down from the riches of His immeasurable wealth and cleanses her by the potency of His own blood, the Life of the Son of God. Thus, our union with Jesus secures for us all the glories and promises of God and the certainty that all our debts of sin and curse have been paid down. Our union with Christ can be summed up in this simple truth:

The Bride gains what the Groom attains, and the Groom lays claim to the Bride's abundant blame.

And Jesus, the Son of Abraham and the receiver of all the promises inasmuch as He is the fulfillment of all the promises attains all the good that God gives and receives all the judgments for the evil that His Bride has committed. In Him any person from any nation is blessed by God.

By faith in Him there is hope for anyone, no matter what blame is borne, He consumes it in His body on His tree.

Just as Abraham was called away from his home, from all that was comfortable and known, so Jesus left His Father's side, His home, all that He had known from all eternity. As Abraham obeyed God, so did Christ Jesus but in a greater submission and a greater faith.

As God promised to bless Abraham and make him great, something that the world had tried to do itself at Babel by its own power, Abraham received by promise and submission. Thus, in the same way Jesus did not make His name great by a huge exertion of power, but by submitting Himself to the God of promise all the way to death because He believed that the Father would raise Him from the dead, entrusting Himself to the Father who knows all with the great unknown.

In this submissive life of absolute obedient trust, Jesus procured for Himself all the promises of God as He has become all the fulfillment of God's grand redemptive designs through His incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension.

If Abraham was promised to be a father of a multitude of nations, it was not merely that he is the father of the Israelites or the Arabs (which he is). That is not a multitude. It's two. No, Abraham became the father of a multitude of nations because his seed, Jesus Christ, opened the door of heaven to all nations, to every tongue and tribe and language. What was broken at Babel was restored in Christ Jesus, disunity unified and expansion extracted to a single city of God with a single door, Jesus Christ. Nobody comes to the Father except through the Son, and anyone who refuses to entrust themselves to Him will be on the outside of the city of God. And yet, anyone who comes to this door of Christ and entrusts themselves to Him will find entrance by faith, no matter what color their skin is, what history their people have, what nation they belong to, what language they may speak, or what sins they have committed. For the deepest and most vile sins

of both culture and individual have their dissolution in the blood of this Son of Abraham, the receiver of all of God's promises.

This is so much the case that Christians in the NT are referred to as "sons of Abraham", that is, "those who believe are sons of Abraham", not merely Hebrews, but Gentiles as well, and walk like Abraham who is remembered as "faithful" and "the father of all who believe" (Rom 4:11).

Those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the believer (Gal 3:9) for they believe in the One who keeps His promises and secures them absolutely.

Christians are those who believe like Abraham – so what is that? What does that look like?

Abraham had his eyes fixed upon the city of God, not the city of Man. His eyes were fixed on an eternal city, thus he obeyed God entrusting himself to the God who covenants His blessings and works out His redemptive plan by His own gracious hand. This is why the Spirit says through the writer of Hebrews that Abraham left his father's home to live in tents in a foreign land in a land of promise. He did it by faith in the God who was building an eternal city made not by the hands of fallible men, but by the hand of God.

And we have this city of promise proclaimed to us and being built by God in a way that Abraham could not have seen. He who longed for the day of the coming of the Son of God, the great architect Himself inserting Himself into His own design, to lay the foundations of this glorious city in which God would dwell with man to make His name great.

Abram saw it far off, as Jesus said, "Abram saw my day and rejoiced in it!" The Seed of Eve would come through Abraham so that all nations might be rescued and restored. From the miraculous birth of Isaac to a 90 year old woman years beyond menopause to the splitting of twin sons into

enemies and down in time over again, generation after generation, until we arrive at a small room in Bethlehem. And He is of the seed of Abraham, the son of promise, the builder of the city of God, the object of the faithful, the deliverer of Mankind, the keeper and receiver of the covenant and the disperser of the blessings of God.

You see, the offer of the gospel is this: God comes to us through His Holy Spirit and disturbs us and convicts us of the futility of our own city, the work of our own hands, the vile wickedness and treachery that seeks to make our name great. Then He lays before us a new city, a new blessing, a new name, a new life...in which we are given pardon for our every sin from the slightest omission to the greatest rebellion, in which are given a new life in the power of His very Spirit, in which we are given a new name as children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. This spirit of adoption He has poured out upon us in Christ Jesus in whom we are brought all the way in, not merely to a throne room of God, but into the living room of God. He does make our name great by His gracious promise, His covenant, His surety, His power, His doing through His Son, our Lord Jesus. He calls us friend of God! How much greater can a name be?! He calls us His children! What more glorious name can a man receive?! He calls us beloved! What intimacy thus need fill a heart full of such unexpected belonging?! We are not Americans or Africans or Koreans, we are beloved children of God in Christ Jesus!! We are His Beloved Bride!!

In Him there is another type of life possible, not based upon the uncertainty of our own powers or the strength of our hands, but an unseen life which is based upon God and gives us peace with God and peace within, peace with Creation, and peace with each other. A life which is summed upward into the restorative life and power of God Himself, which a knowledge of sins forgiven and glory seen. A new life, an entirely new life with strength and power as God's blessing. That

was the offer made to Abraham: "Go out and go in!" This is the offer made to us today as well. Go out from the old way of life, the futile ways of our fathers in seeking to build a kingdom by our own power and instead go in submission and faith in Jesus Christ, the blessing of God and the healer of the nations, the Groom who blesses us with His gains and has borne up our curse of Adam's sin and fulfilled all the perfections of faith in God on our behalf. He is the glory of God promised, arrived, and yet to come.

Abraham longed to see His day, with the anticipation of His arrival, His advent, a thousand year Christmas Eve. We celebrate it, as we should, what great news it is that the Promised Seed has arrived! Yet, we rejoice in trepidations, for this has been such a long day and tomorrow... we marry!!