



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 11:10 – Exodus 19:7

"The Age of Promise"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Tonight we are beginning the study of the age of promise, which is the next of the ages after human government. Now, I'm not going to put it on the board, but this is the age of promise, and it begins in Genesis chapter 11, verse 10, and goes through Exodus chapter 19, and verse 7. And these facts are given on the sheet which is an outline of what I will be saying tonight. Remember, in each one of these ages that has proceeded, God has tested man with respect to a certain revelation which he has given man. In each case man has failed. In the dispensation or age of innocence man failed, and sin was ejected from the Garden of Eden. In age of conscience, he also failed and the flood was sent by God as a judgment upon men. And then in the age of human government, remember these are not inspired designations, simply descriptive terms. In the age of human government, which began just after the flood, this too ended in judgment, the judgment was the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel. So, in each on the ages or dispensation which we have studied, we have seen that man failed. God gave man certain revelations, man failed in obedience to that revelation, and as a result man was judged by God.

But in each one of these ages or dispensations, certain revelation was given concerning the Redeemer to come, the Lord Jesus who would die upon the cross of Calvary and make it possible for all men to find everlasting life. These ages are not distinct ways of salvation. There is only one way of salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In each one of the ages, certain revelation is given, as I say, concerning him. So that when we reach New Testament times, we have ample evidence in the Bible to identify the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God when he comes. He is in this, remember, in the judgment at the end of the age of innocence, we were told that the Redeemer would be the seed of the woman, and he would crush the serpents head. This is a prophecy of the victory of the Lord Jesus over Satan.

Then in the age of conscience we were given further information concerning the Redeemer, primarily in the proper approach to God, and the sacrifices as they reflected him. Then in the age of human government, we were given a very important prophecy, the prophecy that Noah uttered after his experience in sin. And we were then told that the Redeemer would not only be from the human race, but he would also be from the Semitic division of the human race. He would be a descendant of Shem, not of Ham or Japheth, but of Shem. From the term Shem, of course, we get Semitic, so that the Redeemer was to be a member of the Semitic division of the human race. So we have studied these three ages or dispensations. Now, you will notice that we have only proceeded to Genesis chapter 11, verse 9, and yet we have had three distinct ages during which God has tested men.

Now, this as I have drawn it on the board here is, of course, entirely out of proportion to the importance of these ages. Really, this particular section might be called one age, the age of the Gentiles. And furthermore, in connection with the time before the cross, really we should put it in a little half circle just about this big, because it is not the important section of the Old Testament, as you can see, only approximately 12 chapters devoted to it. And yet there will be hundreds of chapters devoted for the remainder of

the time until the time of the cross of the Lord Jesus. But there have been these distinct ages. Man's possible excuse after the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel might have been this, "We the few in Babylon are held responsible for the many. And they suffer for our disobedience." Now, God will turn and be selective in his dealings with man, so that the age of promise, which follows, is an age which is selective. God will reach down and choose one man and his family and deal with men through him. And in this sense, Abram or Abraham as his name later became is a representative man. He is the head of the faithful.

Let me put it on the board this way, to show you what God is doing. He is not now going to deal with the whole world, but he is going to deal with one man and his descendants. Let me put it this way, and let's put Adam here, the first man. From him the whole human race is come so that the race en mass is dealt with. These are the words that I am putting the word, race en mass dealt with. So that from Adam and these chapters in Genesis 1 through 11 God deals with the whole of the human race. But now, beginning with Abram, a new beginning is made, so that Abram is the progenitor, or the head of a new company of people. And God deals now with the Jews.

The terms Hebrew, Israel, and Jew are misunderstood by many people. Hebrew is the linguistic term. Israel is the national term. And Jew is the religious time. But God now, with Abram, will through Abram deal with the human race, so that Abram and his descendant, and ultimately of course, Jesus Christ will come as the seed of Abraham. He will come and through Abram now God will deal with us. The world had turned from God, and so God will now choose one man, and his descendants, and through them he will reach the world. We call this the age of promise, because the promises that God gave to Abram are termed that. I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 6, Hebrews chapter 6. Now that's in the New Testament, Hebrews chapter 6, and in the Scofield Edition of the King James Version, it is page 1295, page 1295. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 13, Hebrews 6, verse 13, now notice this verse, "For

when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." So that in the New Testament these statements that God makes to Abraham which characterize the age of Genesis chapter 12 until the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, he calls them "When God made promise to Abraham."

Turn on over to chapter 11 and verse 9. In Hebrews 11 the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is describing the faith of the Old Testament saints. And Abraham is singled out in verse 8. We might read verse 8, because this bears on chapter 12, which we will be reading in a moment in Genesis. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise." Now notice, this land of Palestine is called the land of promise. It called the land of promise, because God gave it to Abraham and to his seed as a promise. And so we are calling this next age the age of promise, because it is the age characterized in its beginning by the promises to Abraham. And these promises, which were later on confirmed to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to the descendants of Abraham, characterized the time at the giving of the Law an unconditional covenant is added to the Abrahamic one.

Abraham is a very important character, which we next year were to have a Bible class for those who are more advanced in Bible study, such as I hope you will be by that time. You could certainly devote a lot of time to Abraham, because he one of the most important characters in all of the Bible. He is the head of the faithful, and in that sense he is important. We find that fourteen chapters in the Book of Genesis are devoted to the history of this man, Abraham. Now, this is remarkable in that after this time we have seen great things transpire in the Bible, and only eleven chapters approximately, or twelve chapters devoted to them. But now he will devote fourteen chapters to the life of one man. And that is not the end of Abraham, because all through the New Testament you will find references to Abraham. He is referred to probably as much as any Old

Testament character. And now there are references to Moses, as Moses wrote this and Moses wrote that. Probably a much greater portion of the New Testament is devoted to Abraham, I may go out a little on a limb, because I've never really actually counted the references, but probably more of the New Testament is devoted to Abraham than to any other Old Testament character. Paul uses him as an illustration of spiritual truth more than any other man. So Abram is a remarkable man, and a very important man. He is the father of the faithful.

Let's turn to Romans chapter 4, in verse 11 just to see this with our own eyes. Romans chapter 4, in verse 11, that's right after the Book of Acts, remember. Page 1196 if you should have a Scofield Edition of the King James Version; verse 11, by the way notice how this whole chapter is built around Abraham, and the things that we are going to refer to tonight in Genesis chapter 15.

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (In other words, Abraham was not saved by his good works. Abraham was not saved because he was a good man. Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Abraham did not achieve salvation, he believed God, and salvation was given him.) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

That is, if you work for something then you are owed the reward. If, for example, you men worked today, as I hope you did work today, you wouldn't be too happy about it if your employer were to say to you, "Now I want to give you this." You would say, "You're not giving me a thing. I worked hard for this. This is my reward in the sense of the just desserts of my labor. Well now he says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward

not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." In other words, Abraham had righteousness imputed to him on the basis of belief and not on the basis of works. It was a simple grace salvation. Well, we now won't discuss David, but he comes back in verse 11, and I want you to read this verse particularly. "And he received (that is Abraham) the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." So you can see from this that Abraham is the father of all who believe. He is the father of all who believe in the sense that he is the representative of believers. In from this time on, we are the children of Abraham if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ in this sense.

Well now, this age then extends from the time of Genesis chapter 12, 11:9, because this is when the genealogies begin, until the time of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai for Exodus chapter 19, verse 7. Well let's take our Bibles now and turn to Genesis chapter 12, because here we begin to look at the age of promise. And first of all we want to look at the test of the promise, Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 through 3. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram," now you'll notice that Abraham is called Abram. We haven't time to go into all the details of the life of Abraham, but he is called Abram, because this was his original name. Abram means "high father, exalted father." Now this is rather humorous, because you will remember that Abraham married Sarah, and he was characterized by the fact that he had no children. Now, in ancient days if a man did not have children, this was something of a reproach, and particularly to the women, because children were the sign of God's blessing upon them. But Abram did not have any children and he was called "exalted father."

Now, you can see that he must have been the butt of many of a joke by his friends, "exalted father," and yet he does not even have one child. Later on in the Book of Genesis after he is given a promise of a child, Isaac, before Isaac is born, he is given a

new name. And his name changed from Abram which means "exalted father," to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." You can imagine the snickers that must have been produced in Abraham's city when he came from the presence of the Lord and some said to him, "Hi, Abram." And he said, "Wait just a minute; don't call me exalted father anymore. Call me Abraham, or father of a multitude." And you can see the consternation on the faces of those to whom Abraham would say that. And how when he got around the corner they would say, "Can you imagine that? That fellow is gone around the bend. Telling us now to call him Abraham, father of a multitude, and he doesn't even have one child.

Well, anyway, here we read, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." One of the interesting things about the Bible is the fact that many times, to understand fully a passage, we must not only read this passage, but other passages, because sometimes in one section of the Bible further information is given that bears on the understanding of an earlier passage. Sometimes, as we go along in the biblical account, we will find later in the biblical account, information that is chronologically previous to this earlier information. Now, this is what we find in connection with Abraham, because we are not told here anything too much about this call. In the preceding chapter, chapter 11, we have been told some things about it. We have been told that he lived in Ur of the Chaldees, but there is some interesting information over in Joshua chapter 24, verse 2. So I want you to turn there, before we go any further in the Genesis 12 account.

Joshua chapter 24 in verse 2, this is page 285. This is the beginning of the call of Abram. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood," now that means on the other side of the Euphrates River. This was the term given for the Euphrates River. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the Euphrates River in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and

the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." Now the interesting thing about this is that statement, "And they served other gods." Nothing gets said about that in Genesis chapter 11 or 12. It is simply said that God spoke to Abram, and told him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go over to the land of Palestine.

Now, do you remember where Ur of the Chaldees is? Some of you may not have taken much ancient history. Or if you took ancient history, it was ancient history for you by now. In general, I just want to draw this; I'm not going to try to be too accurate. But in general, the Euphrates River starts up here somewhere like this, and goes on down into the Persian Gulf. And the Tigris starts over here some place. They are very close together, ultimately it comes into the Euphrates and they form the Persian Gulf. Now, Ur of the Chaldees is right along in here, approximately. Charran is up in here, this is a stopping place on the way to the land of Palestine. And on down in here we have the Sea of Galilee and Palestine. So that Abraham started in Ur of the Chaldees, traveled apparently up to Charran, he was on the upper side of the flood. And then after his father died, he came on down into the land, something like this. He was at Damascus and then on down into the land this way. So that is in general the path that Abraham took.

Now this statement, that he "served other gods," is interesting. Ur of the Chaldees, we must remember, was a very unusual city. We are not to think, and I think I mentioned this before, but I'll mention it again. We are not to think of Abram as a man who lived in a very primitive place. Abram lived in a city in which was one of the wealthiest and most civilized of his day. It was not an ordinary country town, it was a city, and Abraham grew up in this. It was one of the most advanced cities of its time. And actually, its civilization was very advanced. From the excavations that men like Sir Leonard Woolley and others have made at Ur of the Chaldees, we know a lot about this city. We know that the god who was worshipped the most in Ur of the Chaldees was the moon god or the god by the name of Nanar. And about a fourth of the city, I think, was

devoted to the worship of this god. So that Abram, his father Terah, and his family apparently worshiped the moon god. And God spoke to Abram, no doubt because he was seeking to know the true God, and told Abram that he was to leave. The text says, "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee."

Now this must have been a tremendous call of faith for Abram. Think of it for a moment, this God whom he had not worshipped and whom he did not know, spoke to him, revealed himself to him, and told him that he was to leave Ur. He was to leave his country, he was to leave his kindred, he was to leave his father's house, and he was to go into a land the Lord would show him. This is a remarkable step of faith that Abram took. It's so remarkable that it's referred to many times in the Bible, and specifically, and I think one of the important places, by Stephen in his sermon which he preached before the counsel in Acts chapter 7. Now let's turn there, because I think we should read this account of him, too. Acts chapter 7, New Testament remember, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Acts, as Dr. McGee likes to say. [Laughter] Acts chapter 7, page 1156, she's going to have to buy one just in order to find it in a hurry. [Laughter] Acts chapter 7, and I want read now beginning with verse 2, Acts 7, verse 2. Do we have it?

"And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."

So the God of glory appeared to Abraham. I assume, because as I say, in the Bible this is the general pattern that Abraham had been seeking to know the genuine

God. No doubt burdened because of his sin, groping about for God as Paul says the heathen do, in Acts chapter 17. God appeared to Abram who was seeking him, and told him to leave everything and go out to this strange land. He was to march without a map. He was to make progress with out a program. But it was to be a grind with the genuine God, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, remember, in the 8th chapter, in the 8th verse of that 11th chapter says, "He went out, not knowing whither he went." This is a remarkable step of faith on the part of Abraham, and that is why he is such an illustration of faith. "He went out not knowing whither he went."

This is, in essence, that which God expects of every believer in Jesus Christ. He expects us to take two steps of faith. Number one, he reveals to us through the preaching of the word of God, that there is only one way of salvation, it is through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Have you ever thought about that? Jesus of Nazareth claims an exclusive approach to God. He claims the one way of salvation, "I am not a way, not part of the truth, not one only who lives, but I am the way, the truth." Now, I don't think this means that he is trying to say that he is biology or he is the truth of nuclear physics. When he says that he is the truth, he means the truth whereby we may come to know God, the truth in the spiritual realm. "I am the way, the way to God, the truth, the life. No man cometh unto the Father except through me." The apostles picked this up, and Peter says, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name unto heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." No other name. He is the only way.

Now, God expects us to take the step of faith. Salvation does not depend on joining the church. It does not depend on doing good works. You are not saved if you are a Baptist. Baptists have to be saved, too. Presbyterians have to be saved. Roman Catholics have to be saved. Those who are not members of any church have to be saved. And if you're a member of a very fine church, where the gospel is preached constantly,

where it is faithfully proclaimed, you have to believe, too. God says Jesus Christ died for the sins of the human race. He says that we are sinners and that we need salvation. He says that Christ has borne that sin. And he says that you may have everlasting life if you will trust Jesus Christ, my provision for your sin.

Now, he expects us to take a step of faith. And so we have to believe this. We stop trusting in the church. We stop trusting in our family background. We stop trusting in the fact that we're good citizens. And we start trusting in the Lord Jesus, and this is a step of faith, faith in God's word. Faith in the fact that God tells the truth when he says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved." And so we take this step of faith, we believe it. If we have believed in Jesus Christ, if we have said in our hearts, "Lord Jesus I do accept Thee as my personal Savior. I believe that Thou hast died for my sins." Can we say that we have everlasting life? Of course we can, because God says, "He that hath the Son hath life." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So, if I were to say to you, "Have you believed in Jesus Christ?" I'm speaking of a personal decision. And you say, "Yes, I have. I don't understand everything, but I have believed in Christ." And then if I were to say to you, "Do you have everlasting life?" What should you say to me? "Certainly."

After I had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, the man who led me to the Lord, Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse, just a few weeks afterwards said to me, "Louis, have you believed in Jesus Christ yet?" And I said, "Yes sir, I have." He said, "Do you have everlasting life?" And I said, "I hope so." [Laughter] He said, "How can you say, 'I hope so.' He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Louis, do you have everlasting life." And I said, "I hope so. I think so." He said, "He that believeth on the Son, have you believed?" "Well yes, I've believed on the Son." "Hath everlasting life." And so finally I said, "Yes, I've got it." [Laughter] And Roland Hill, you know, used to say, "H-A-T-H, that spells got it." [Laughter] "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

Now that's the first step, and it's very simple, you see. And you might say, "That's so simple, it's so easy. God surely must require more." No, he doesn't, and that's why we ought to be so thankful to him. This is why, when you read through Paul's writing, you get something of the sense of his appreciation of the grace of God. That he, the great sinner, could come to see that Jesus Christ had borne his sin. And God, in effect, said, "Paul I have provided the way of salvation. You cannot work your way to heaven. I have done it through my Son Jesus Christ. All you have to do is receive it as a free gift." And so Paul received it, and he never got over the wonderful grace of God, and the gift of salvation. That's why in all of the pages of Paul you see shouting out the grace of God, and no man really understands God who doesn't understand something of his wonderful grace. If there isn't something deep down in your heart touched by the fact that Christ died for our sins, and we have salvation on the basis of the sufferings of the Son of God, then maybe you haven't really believed in him. But that's the first step of faith.

It's an amazing thing to me, you know, that people can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and they can say, "I am a Christian. I have believed in Christ. I am a Christian." But then their daily lives, they want to live their own lives day by day. They want to go out and fight the world in their own strength. They want to fight their family in their own strength. The problems of life are all on their shoulder, and so they go throughout life with the assurance that they are Christians, but bearing all their burdens. They have been known to commit the greatest of all burdens, the burden of sin, the greatest of all responsibility, the responsibility to be right before God. They could willingly commit that to Jesus Christ, but they cannot commit the problems of their business, the problems of their family, the problems of their daily life. They cannot commit them to the Lord. Isn't that a strange thing?

Isn't a strange thing that we can by faith receive everlasting life, the greatest gift of all, and yet we cannot by faith receive the promises of God for daily living? Isn't that

strange? Isn't it a strange thing that we can, by faith, receive everlasting life, the greatest gift of all, and yet we cannot by faith receive the promises of God for daily living? Isn't that strange? Isn't it strange? If you can trust God for the gift of salvation, the greatest of all gifts, can you not trust him for your daily living? You see, we are saved by faith, and we are to walk by faith, because this wonderful transaction takes place when I believe in Christ. God comes through the Holy Spirit to indwell me. Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Savior, and he walks with me. And he asks me to cast my burdens upon him, and so day by day we are to walk, casting our burdens upon him.

Abram learned the truth of walking with God. He did not walk perfectly, nor will you, nor I. We'll want to pick up the burden again. Have you ever seen people stand in front of an elevator with a burden, physical burden? And get on the elevator and ride up holding the burden? It's a perfect picture of Christians, perfect picture. The live Jesus is taking them to heaven, they're trusting the elevator but they're carrying their little burdens too. Wouldn't think about just putting it down and letting the elevator take care of it, I'm sure. It's like the old lady who got on an airplane for the first time. She flew to visit her daughter. When she got off, her daughter rushed up and said, "Mama how did you like it?" She said, "I loved it, but I didn't put my whole weight down once." [Laughter] Many Christians are doing the same thing. They've committed themselves to the Lord, and they are Christians, but day by day they are the most unhappy people you call Christians.

Is it possible for a Christian to be unhappy? It's possible for a Christian to be unhappy, definitely. But Christians ought not to be characterized by unhappiness. It's possible for the Lord Jesus to stand at Lazarus' tomb and weep. But it was out of sympathy. Jesus Christ was never unhappy, because he was worrying, because he was troubled about tomorrow. It is possible to be unhappy. I'm not telling you you should go around with a smile on your face all the time, but surely in the problems of life, if we can commit the greatest of all to Christ, and expect him to meet our needs; we can commit the little things, too. Well, I had not put that in my notes, but anyway, Abraham

made me think of that, because Abraham is a man of faith. By faith he went out not knowing whither he went, and he was willing to trust God day by day. Now, he fell, he sinned, but he was the man of faith.

Now, let's look at what happens. He obeys this call imperfectly, of course. He left and he went to Charran, and he left his family. Now, God had said, "Get thee out from thy country and from thy kindred," but Abram had to take his family along. The Lord had told Abraham "leave everything." When he left Ur, and he left his country, but he couldn't, you know, part with his family, and so he got to Charran, and in Acts it says, when his father was dead, then God brought him down into the land. Because of his imperfect obedience, he remained at Charran for some time. But then when his father died, he came down into the land.

Now, we read in verse 2, the promises that were given to Abram. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." What was Abraham's responsibility? Well, Abraham's responsibility was to remain in the land, number one. God said, "I am going to take you to a land, which I am going to give you." And then in the 26th chapter, and I have the reference in your lessons, so you may look it up, he reaffirmed this responsibility that Abram and his descendant were to stay in the land, the land of Palestine was the land of blessing, and they were to stay there. That was the first responsibility that they had, to remain in the land.

The second responsibility was to be witnesses of God. They were to reveal the truth of God to others. Abraham and his descendants were to be the means of blessing to the whole human race. God did not choose this one man Abraham as if to say, "Now Abraham you are the only one I want." But it was through Abraham God was to reach the world, which had turned away from him at Babylon. So through this one man he wants to reach the world, so that Abraham is to be a witness. And Abraham's

descendants are to be witnesses, too. And again in your notes, I have put the passages in Israel, we don't have time to turn to them right now, in which God spoke to Israel and said, "Ye are my witnesses." Not only are we to be witnesses today, but Israel was to be the witness of God in those days. But most of all, Abraham was to receive these promises which God gave. And Abraham was to be the one through whom these promises were to be conferred to others, ultimately, to the whole human race.

Notice these promises; they are personal, national, and universal. Personal, "I will make thy name great," verse 2. This promise, "I will make thy name great," has been fulfilled in a wonderful way. If you are to go up to a Mohammedan today, who was a real follower of Islam, and ask him about Abraham, he would tell you, "In our religion, Abraham is the greatest of men." Abraham is revered among Mohammedans. If you were to talk to a Jew and ask him the place of Abraham in Judaism, he would say, "Abraham has a large place in Judaism. We are the children of Abraham." Abraham is revered by the Jews. And Christians, if you were to ask Christians, what is the place of Abraham in Christianity. We would say he is one the fathers, one of the greatest of the fathers, he is the father of the faithful. And in that sense, in the sense that we believe and he believed, he is our father, too. And we are the children of Abraham. So here is Abraham revered in Mohammedism, he is revered in Judaism, and he is revered in Christianity. "I will make thy name great." It is remarkable how this prophecy has been fulfilled.

But not only was Abraham given this personal promise, he is also given a national promise. Notice verse 1, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee," a land. Chapter 15, verses 7 and 8, this land is described as great in size. Now, when we think of the land of Palestine, which was given to Abraham, we must not think of just a little piece of land around here, something like this. Abraham was given land all the way over to the Euphrates, and all the way down to the Nile. He was given a wide territory. He was given land of approximately three hundred thousand square miles in area. Today, the land of Israel

had about twelve thousand square miles. So you can see, for the wide territory Abram was given. Never has Israel possessed all of this land. Once or twice in the Old Testament she did possess a wide territory, but never has she possessed completely the land as promised in Genesis chapter 15. Now, lest there be any doubt about this, long after she possessed the most of this land, the promise is still given in the Old Testament to the prophets that she shall possess the Promised Land, which is an evidence that they never had really possessed it. So Abram was given national promises. His descendants would one day possess this wide territory.

And finally, he is given universal promises in the latter part of verse 3. "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." "In thee all families of the earth shall be blessed." In other words, in Abraham people from out of every kindred, tribe, and tongue, and nation shall be blessed. What is meant? Turn with me to Galatians chapter 3, verse 16, page 1244. Now, while you are looking for that, in case you are having a little difficulty finding Galatians, because that's a small book, I'm going to read the 1st verse of the New Testament, Matthew chapter 1, in verse 1. You just keep your fingers in Galatians 3:16. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," Matthew chapter 1, verse 1. Now let's read Galatians 3, verse 16. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." Paul says, "He," that is God, "He saith not, And to seeds," plural, "as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed," and then he adds the interpretation, "which is Christ." Christ is the seed of Abraham. These promises which were made to Abraham were made to Abraham and to his seed. They were made to Jesus Christ, ultimately. So that "in thee," in Christ, because Christ is son of Abraham. "In thee shall all the nations of the earth, all the families of the earth, be blessed."

So here then is a promise of universal blessing, through Abraham, ultimately through Jesus Christ who would die on the cross of Calvary. So here then, promises of a personal character to Abraham, promises of a national character, he would be given a land, and promises of a spiritual character and universal character, he would be the

means of blessing to all the families of the earth. These are remarkable promises. I cannot impress upon you too strongly that the first 11 chapters of Genesis is just a prologue in the Bible, because from Genesis chapter 12 on through to the end of the Bible, we are concerned with the promises made to Abraham. This is the greatest revelation that God has made up to this time, and will be the greatest revelation until we, well really many things are added to this, but until we come to New Testament times. And they build upon the promises to Abraham.

One other thing I want you to notice about these promises, their character. Did God say anything to Abraham, if you are obedience I will do this? We do not find any reference to this. Now, once or twice later on we have some statements that seem to say that. Those statements, however, are not to be understood, as if the promises are cancelled in case Abram disobeyed. For it is plainly stated after Abram's disobedience that the promises still hold. They are to be understood as conditioning the enjoyment of the promises, not the possession of the promises. Just as if I were to say to my son, I don't think I would ever be so foolish as to do this, well my son is too old. Let's suppose he has reached the age of sixteen, and so I say to him, "Now I want to give you," well since I'm just making up an illustration, "I want to give to you a Cadillac." [Laughter] "And I have bought this Cadillac and it is in your name. It is yours, but I will give you the keys to the Cadillac only if you remain in fellowship with me." As long as he is in fellowship with me, as long as he obeys me, he has the use of the car, which belongs to him. But if he disobeys me, when I take the keys back, though the car belongs to him, his use of it, enjoyment of it, is conditioned by his obedience.

Now, in Israel's case, Israel was given, and Abraham as the father, they were given unconditional promises as far as their possession, as their ownership is concerned. But their enjoyment of it was conditioned by their obedience, and that is why, in the Old Testament, finally when Israel is so disobedience, God must send them into captivity, and so they go into captivity and ultimately they are scattered to the ends of the earth, but the

promises are still their promises. These promises given to Abraham are unconditional promises. "I will make you name great. I will give you the land. In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." These promises must ultimately be fulfilled completely to Abraham and to his seed, so they are unconditional promises.

This is illustrated by the sacrifice in chapter 15, and I want you to turn over here for just a moment. Remember Abram had difficulty with these promises. He was like so many of us. You know what we need as Christians more than anything else? I say more than anything else, next to trust in God, we need the under side of a coin. Do you know what that is? Patience, patience, so many Christians, now there are some ladies here, and I'm not going to say that the men are more impatient than the women, because I think that we're all underneath just the same, but it seems to me as if the women err more in impatience, where the men err more in the exercise of faith. The men frequently will not really believe God, but the women will get impatient. They will believe God, but then they can't seem to hold out, you know. And they give in, and they don't have enough patience.

Well, now that's an observation. That's not in the Bible. Abraham was impatient. Notice chapter 15, the promises have been given now, Abram you're going to have a seed, and in this seed will all the families of the earth be blessed. But Abraham didn't have any children. He believed God, but he was impatient. He said, "When?" Chapter 15, "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." In other words, keep trusting Abram. The time will come. "And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" Lord we've been waiting on the fulfillment of these promises for a long time. I don't have any children yet. Is it possible that Eliezer, my steward, is really the seed? Is that what you meant when you said, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed?" Did you mean in my house? Did you mean Eliezer was going to be the means of blessing? "And

Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." Lord, you're giving me these promises, but you see I'm just getting so impatient, so impatient. "And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir."

Abram, you're going to have a son, and he's going to be your son. Now, elsewhere we know that the reason that God waited so that Abraham could get to the place where he couldn't have any children, where there would be no question. And so God waited on him to become an hundred years old, and Sarah also couldn't have any children, because this was to be a child of promise. You see, if a child had been earlier, they might have thought "We were responsible." God wanted, by the sign of the birth of Isaac to show them that he must fulfill the promise. "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Abram looked at the stars and he saw hundreds of stars. Actually, of course, in those days you could only see about a thousand stars. We didn't know for a long time that there were any more than a thousand stars, until someone invented the telescope, then we discovered that there literally millions of stars. And now we know that there are innumerable stars.

But anyway, Abram saw all of those stars and God said, "Abram, so shall thy seed be." And Abram in a magnificent exhibition of faith,"believed in the Lord and he counted it unto him for righteousness." You know, the word for believe in the Bible, in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word aman, it's the word from which we get amen, or amen. So be it, verily. Abraham amen'd God. It's as if when Abram saw all of those stars and the Lord said, "So shall Thy seed be," he said Amen. He believed in the Lord, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. He believed in a promise which he could not perform, and his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. Just as we believe in Jesus Christ, and our faith is reckoned to us for righteousness as we read in Roman chapter 5.

Verse 7, "And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" I know Lord that I am going to have this land, but how can I be sure of it? Give me a sign. And so now we find this remarkable sacrifice. This is one of the most remarkable things. It was the custom in ancient days to sacrifice in a very interesting way. This, we have record of heathen lands as well. For example, when Alexander the Great died, and there was a little question about succession, in one particular place, where part of his army was gathered, they became so at odd one with another that finally they had to have a meeting, and they agreed the Calvary was opposed to the infantry, and finally they came to an agreement. And to settle the matter, they carried out a sacrifice very much like this, they took a dog, and they cut the dog in half, and they put the dog, half of the dog here and half of the dog here, and the whole army marched between the pieces of the dog in token of the fact that an agreement had been made between them.

Now, I want you with that in mind, listen as we read. Verse 9, " And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not." Now, apparently in the case of the birds, one was put on one side and one on the other. But here you see the animals are divided, one side here, one side here. "And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." That is, he kept them from feeding on the pieces of the dead animals. And when the sun was going down," now remember this is the answer to, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

"And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." He has something like a nightmare. "And he said unto Abram," he heard the voice of God, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a

stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." This is a prophecy of the bondage in the land of Egypt. "And also that nation, whom they shall serve," Egypt, "will I judge." And that's what happened, of course. In Moses day God did judge them. Pharaoh and his host were overthrown in the Red Sea; remember when they attempted to follow them. In addition to all of the judgments that came as a result of Moses magic in the land. "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace;" verse 14, "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." They came out with the riches of the Egyptians, remember. "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." In other words, it's not quite the time Abram, for you to possess this land. "And," now notice verse 17, "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark," and all of the animals laid out, space between them, one half of the animal on this side, one half of the animal on the other, and now as the sun goes down, and we read, "It was dark, and behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp," this was a cylindrical kind of thing, the Hebrew text implies, which began to move toward the pieces of the animals. It was the sign of the visible presence of God. As of course, the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day would be later on. "Behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

Now, the thing I want you to notice about this is that when this covenant is made, and when the covenant sacrifices are accomplished, and when the pieces are set, some on this side, and some on this. God did not say to Abram, as the custom was when men made agreements in that day, they passed down through the pieces in token of the fact that I have my responsibility and you have your responsibility. But according to the record, only God went through the pieces in token of the fact that he was taking it upon

himself to unconditionally fulfill these promises to Abraham. Abraham would have his seed. He would have his great name. And he will have his land. These were unconditional promises made to Abram. So Abram and his seed were responsible to reveal the truth of God, to remain in the land, to receive the promises. The history of this section in the Book of Genesis, and then Exodus is they disobeyed God; they ultimately went down to the land of Egypt. They did not remain in the land. They were not his witnesses. And Israel got into the land of Egypt, Pharaoh said, "Who is this God, Jehovah? I've never heard of Jehovah." They were not witnesses, but the promises were unconditional. The age ends with Israel in the land of Egypt in bondage, because of disobedience. And again, man has failed.

Well, I'll say a few more words about the age of promise next time, because there are some important revelations concerning Christ, such as when Abraham offered up his son Isaac and what that meant, and also the Passover sacrifice. But we have to stop at this point. It's a few minutes past nine. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee for these wonderful truths contained within it. May our understanding of it grow day by day. And enable us, Lord, to read it with understanding. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Johnson] If you have a question, I would be glad to try to answer for a few minutes. Those of you who have to go, of course, you are free to go. Yes sir?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] The River of Egypt is the River Nile.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Right that was intended to be approximately the area. That is a rough figure, but I think that is roughly the area at that particular time from the Euphrates over to the Nile. And this is why, according to the Bible, Israel the nation has a future. Because they must, ultimately, possess these promises. This is why I believe, though we cannot be dogmatic about this, this is why there is a nation Israel again in the land of Palestine today, after approximately two thousand years, you see. They were scattered in 70 AD. But in 1948, Israel became a nation again, and there is today a nation in the land, but they don't possess anything but just a little small area. And of course, they are unbelievers. The ones to whom God has given this land will be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. So there must be a national conversion of Israel before there can be a national possession of this land. But we will study this as we go along, and deal with it in a little more detail in the future; along about April and May we'll get to this.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] I don't think that that is really the, I think that the Nile is the river that is meant.

[Comment from the audience]

[Johnson] I haven't looked this up in some time, but I'm almost certain the Nile is meant by that. I'll have to check on that just to be sure.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] No, remember that when I said that he had three types of promises, personal, national, universal or spiritual you could also say. Except that there is a sense in which the land is a spiritual blessing, a spiritual promise, too. But the land is not the same as the universal. The universal promise is, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Spiritual blessings, salvation, the gift of the Holy Spirit as Paul says in Galatians 3, but the national blessing is the reference to the land, and that is there. Any other questions?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Right, Israel, exactly. In fact, it is distinctly stated in Zechariah chapter 12 that they shall look upon him whom they pierced, and they shall mourn. And then the tribes are listed, so many out of each tribe mourning so forth. Zechariah chapter 12.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] You speak of it as the Israelitish nation, the nation Israel.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] As a nation, yes. They were a Hebrew race. Judaism is the religion. A Jew means a follower of Judaism. Originally, we were talking about this before; a Jew originally was just a member of the tribe of Judah. But then it took on a broader term, and thus came to mean a whole nation.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well, no I'm not sure I would go along with you there. I think the ones that call today Jews are Jews. [Laughter] Oh yes, well you have some who have become Jews like who was it? Right Sammy Davis. Now, strictly speaking, of course, he has become a Jew, but we would not probably, is that what you had in mind?

[Comment from the audience]

[Johnson] [Laughter] Of course it would be something to meet Sammy Davis and for him to say to us, "Well, I'm a Jew." But in a sense he could say that.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well, they may be included in the sense that they ultimately become amalgamated, but this promise which is to fulfilled through him, I want to emphasize this, is not fulfilled to Jews just because they are Jews, but they must be believers. You see? They must become believers, but also they will be physically Jews, spiritually they will be believers. And those who are physically Jews who are not believers, are not going to possess the land. They are ruled out. Actually Israel goes through great judgments in the future. And they are reduced in size as a result of the great tribulation which is called the time of Jacob's trouble.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] I think those are, that means literally Jews. They claim to be Jews and thus claim to have connections with the church in Jerusalem, because of course, the early church did have strong, it was made up of Jews for the most part. And they apparently

were claiming certain connections with the church in Jerusalem. And thus were legalists, but they really had no connection.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] We are going to; I think perhaps it would be better to wait on it. We will talk about that, though, in the future, because they are going through great judgments before they inherit the land.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] If we were to go strictly by the Genesis account we would say that there is no clear evidence that he knew of the cross. I, myself, feel that he, since there are many things that God spoke to Abram about that are not recorded in Genesis, obviously, just as in the case of many of the Old Testament believers. It seems hardly possible to me that Abraham should not have known certain things about the redeemer to come. He certainly knew that there would be a person to come who would be his redeemer. And we do read in John chapter 8, though this text has been interpreted differently by some, that Abram rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad. Now some have thought that that meant that Abram saw when his day came, that he saw it from heaven. But I don't think that that is really what our Lord means. I think that most likely when he offered Isaac he really came to understand.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] There is this thing about the Old Testament revelation. It is, as we have said more than once, and finally it dawns on us as we see these things as we go along,

that there progress in revelation in the Old Testament. More is revealed as time goes on. And everything that Abraham believed involved within it a Redeemer. Though he may not have seen a Redeemer, but what he did in exercising faith the equivalent in exercising faith in a redeemer, because you see, when God spoke to him and said, "Look at those stars, Abram, so shall your seed be." Well, now Abram knew that he was dead physically, and yet he said that he were going to have seed as the stars in the heaven. And then when he believed God, in essence he believed in a God of the resurrection; the God who could bring life out of death. And that's the Paul argues it in Romans chapter 4. He said, "It was not written for his sake only, but it was imputed for him, but for ours too, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on God who raised Jesus from the dead. So he exercised the same kind of faith that we exercised. We are told today that Christ died, and that he was raised from the dead. And we are to believe in him. So we believe in him believing that God is a God of the resurrection. That is the essence of our faith, that he can bring life out of death. And Abram, when he believed God about the seed, he believed in the God of the resurrection. So his...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]