

Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-4—Genesis 12-14

The 12th chapter of Genesis is a very important chapter to know to be able to understand much of what the rest of the Bible tells us. It is here that we have our introduction to the man Abram, later known as Abraham. So let's begin by reading Genesis 12:1-5. We see several important things here that we need to take into account. First, God is making some promises to Abram, not if Abram obeys God, but from a unilateral approach. God doesn't really give Abram an out in His command to Abram to leave his home country and go to where God directs him. He was to go, and Abram went. Abram did not really have a choice, but we can also look at the situation from Abram's perspective. He believed God, so he did as God told him.

Abram was in what we now call the Mesopotamian area, and we know that the land that God was sending him to was the land of Canaan, or what we today call the Palestine area. However, Abram did not know this at the time, but rather obeyed God and went as God directed. He took his wife, Sarai, and his nephew Lot and all that they had, and left Haran and traveled to the land of Canaan.

Abram was 75 years old when he left his homeland. It has taken us 11 chapters to cover a little over 2000 years of history. It will take the next 13 chapters to cover the next 100 years, the rest of the life of Abram, so I think we can consider that these are very important chapters, information that we need to know.

As we said, God made some important promises to Abram as he started his journey. However, through the next 10 chapters, we'll see that God continued to give Abram promises that, when we have them all together, promise Abram and his seed to be the ultimate rulers of the world. The apostle Paul, in Romans 4:13, considers all of the promises to be one promise and begins the verse, "**For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world...**" so we know the intent of God in making these promises. Let's get a little ahead of ourselves and list all of the promises so that we can hopefully understand their importance better as we continue our study. In my study, I have broken them down into 10 basic promises, but with various expansions, as follows:

1. **I will make of thee a great nation.** (Gen. 12:2)
 - A. **Thou shalt be a father of many nations.** (Gen. 17:4)
 - B. **I will make nations of thee.** (Gen. 17:6)

2. **Kings shall come out of thee.** (Gen. 17:6)

3. **I will bless thee.** (Gen. 12:2)
 - A. **That in blessing, I will bless thee.** (Gen. 22:17)

4. **I will make thy name great.** (Gen. 12:2)

5. **Thou shalt be a blessing.** (Gen. 12:2)
 - A. **In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.** (Gen. 12:3)
 - B. **And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.** (Gen. 22:18)

6. **I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.** (Gen. 12:3)

7. **Unto thy seed will I give this land.** (Gen. 12:7)
 - A. **Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the river, the river Euphrates.** (Gen. 15:8)
 - B. **I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee...all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.** (Gen. 17:8)

8. **I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.** (Gen. 13:16)
 - A. **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.** (Gen. 15:5)
 - B. **In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.** (Gen. 22:17)
 - C. **I will make thee exceeding fruitful.** (Gen. 17:6)

9. **I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.** (Gen. 15:1)
 - A. **(I will) be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.** (Gen. 17:7)
 - B. **I will be their God.** (Gen. 17:8)

10. **Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.** (Gen. 22:17)

The rest of the Bible is predicated on these promises, so it is very important that we learn and understand them. We'll discuss them more fully as we come to them in our study.

The first promise, **"I will make of thee a great nation"** seems a little shaky at first as Sarai was barren, as we shall see. But again, keep God's overall plan in mind and watch how things work out. We will find this first promise begins to be fulfilled in the creation of the nation of Israel as the children of Israel moved out of the land of Egypt during the Exodus. If we look at these promises as building blocks, so to speak, of a kingdom to rule the kingdoms of the world, I believe they will be easier understood. No single promise fulfills the full promise as we saw envisioned by Paul in Romans 4:13. The first thing that there had to be for there to be a kingdom, was for there to be a people that could be established into a nation. In chapter 17, we see that the nation becomes plural, nations.

(Before I am misunderstood, please understand that when I say “to rule the world,” I am not implying man’s way of ruling by oppression, but rather by God’s way as exemplified by Jesus Christ whose way is love. This method of ruling is yet to be fully understood by man.)

The next promise we have here in Genesis 12 is, **“I will bless thee.”** This did not mean that Abram would be free of all troubles. Abram had his share of troubles and problems, but I don’t believe that it could be argued that he was not blessed. He was prosperous, wise, strong, healthy, and lived a long life. But beyond that, his family has also been blessed, even though at times they were quite sinful. Other nations have been destroyed for less than the sins of Israel, the family of Abraham to whom these promises applied. If we follow this people down through history, even though they spent some time in captivity, this blessing has followed them to this present day, even though certainly as a nation or nations, they have done nothing to deserve this blessing. They were the first to receive the gospel, they have been at the forefront of exploration and development of new lands and territories, have enjoyed greater prosperity than most any of the non-Israelite nations, and most importantly, it was to these Israelites that Jesus said He came.

Abram was to have his name made great, **“and make thy name great.”** We will see that God later changed his name to Abraham, and his name is probably revered more than the name of any other man in history. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all call him Father Abraham.

God told Abram, **“Thou shalt be a blessing,”** and then in verse 3 he is told, **“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”** I think we all know that the greatest of these blessings is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The fullness of this blessing is yet to be recognized, but we can be assured that it will be. But it is also in the descendents of Abram that we have seen the world’s greatest technological developments from the printing press to the majority of the technology we enjoy today. It has been this people that have opened up the wilderness areas of the world to the populace of the world and it has been this people who have been the primary missionaries of the gospel.

He was also told that, **“I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.”** A reading of the Old Testament gives us example after example of God blessing or cursing different nations for their treatment of Israel and/or Judah. Even when God used a nation to discipline Israel, He punished them severely for their actions against Israel. Assyria and Babylon are both good examples of this. There is no doubt that this has carried forward to the Israel nations of today.

But keep in mind that the intent of these promises is to develop a world ruling kingdom, that though there have been times when Israel was a dominate nation, this kingdom won’t be fully recognized until after the first resurrection.

(Read Gen. 12:6-9) We have another promise here. **“Unto thy seed will I give this land.”** With any nation or kingdom, the essentials are people, land, economy, government, and a religion. We see God putting these in place through the promises. However, notice that here

God says **“unto thy seed,”** so the land was not given to Abram, even though he spent most of the rest of his life in this land. While this land eventually proved too small, this is the beginning of their land inheritance.

(Read Gen. 12:10-13) Even though God had just brought Abram and his wife Sarai into the land of Canaan, He caused them to go further south into Egypt by bringing a severe drought on the land of Canaan. While we are not told why God did this at this point, it will be worth our time to see the reasons as they appear in our study. We should note that at this time, Egypt was the dominant kingdom and controlled the land of Canaan as well.

We’re told that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. This concerned Abram as he feared that the Egyptians would kill him and take Sarai. So he told Sarai and all that were with him to say to the Egyptians that he was her brother. This was not a lie since he was really a half-brother to her. But it did cause some problems.

(Read Gen. 12:14-20) Sure enough, when the Egyptians saw her, they told Pharaoh about her and he had her brought to him. However, God plagued Pharaoh on account of Sarai until he realized that he didn’t have the whole story. The account of this story in the book of Jasher says that an angel stood over Sarai and every time that Pharaoh tried to touch her, the angel struck him down. (The book of Jasher is another book that details a lot of the events we read of in Genesis. It is mentioned in Joshua 10:13 and II Samuel 1:18. I cannot verify its accuracy, but it does offer some interesting details that the Old Testament does not record.)

The Pharaoh had treated Abram very well, for Sarai’s sake by giving him a great many sheep, oxen, he asses, menservants, maidservants, she asses and camels. Abram came away with great riches. In Gen. 16, we’re told that Sarai had a maidservant by the name of Hagar that was an Egyptian. Again in the book of Jasher, we’re told that Hagar was a daughter of Pharaoh by one of his concubines and that he gave her to Sarai at this time. He told Hagar that she would be much better off as a servant in the household of Abraham than a mistress in his own household.

So we have two reasons that God sent Abram to Egypt, one, his riches were greatly increased and two, Hager, who was to become the mother of the Arab people came into Abram’s household.

Pharaoh then sent Abram and Sarai and all that were with them out of the land of Egypt back to the land of Canaan.

(Read Gen. 13) I think it safe to say that Abraham came up out of Egypt a much richer man than he was when he went down to Egypt because of the incident with his wife, Sarai, and the Pharaoh that we studied in chapter 12. Both he and Lot were considered to be rich men because of their livestock. Their flocks and herds increased until the land could no longer sustain them if they stayed together, so they decided to separate. Lot chose what appeared to be the better pasture land as he went toward Sodom, but we’re told that the men of Sodom were very wicked. The Canaanites are still in the land, but there appears to be plenty of room for

everybody at this time.

In verse 16 we have the promise, **“I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.”** This promise is the most repeated promise of all the promises. If God follows through with His promise to greatly multiply Abram’s seed, so that they would be in number as the dust of the earth, then the land of Canaan that He is giving Abram and his seed is not going to be near large enough to hold them. In the book of Exodus, if we extrapolate the number of men that Moses tells us were of the children of Israel, there would have been approximately three million people when they moved out of Egypt going back to the land of Canaan, but we’re told that there was not enough of them to completely fill the land at that time. We know, as we continue to read the Biblical history of Israel, that they varied up and down population wise, but God’s promise is not to be taken lightly. II Samuel 7:10 appears to give us the answer to this potential problem in that God has more land reserved for Abram and his seed as the need arises.

(Read Gen. 14:1-12) This can be a little confusing, but if you read verses 1-3 and then go to verse 8 and continue, this tells us of this particular war between the four kings, Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer, and Tidal and the five kings, Bera, Birsha, Shinab, Shemeber and Bela. Verses 4-7 tells us what led up to this current war. Note that Moses tells us that the battle took place in the vale of Siddim, which he says is the salt sea. In chapter 19, we will read of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire. Verse 10 of chapt. 14 tells us that the vale was full of slimepits. These were asphalt pits which probably furnished the fuel for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Some scholars have speculated that these slimepits, after burning off the asphalt and oil that was in them provided the cavity that then became the Salt Sea, or the Dead Sea. Moses’ comment here that the vale of Siddim was (in Moses’ time) the Salt Sea, would give credibility to this speculation.

The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah lost the battle and all the goods and people of Sodom and Gomorrah were taken by the four kings as booty. This happened to include Lot, Abram’s nephew, and all his goods.

(Read Gen. 14:13-16) When Abram found out what had happened, he took his servants and the Amorites that were allied with him, and pursued after the four kings. Abram attacked the four kings in the night and defeated them and returned with all of the goods and people which included Lot and his family and goods.

(Read Gen. 14:17-24) The king of Sodom went out to meet Abram, and those returning with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which we are told was the king’s dale, or valley. We’re not told which king that it belonged to however, but because we suddenly have another king, Melchizedek, king of Salem, involved, it may be his. Salem is Jerusalem. This is the only mention of Melchizedek in the Old Testament, but it is very important that we look closely at what we’re told here as we find mention again in the book of Hebrews. We’re told in the

scriptures we have just read that Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine and that he was the priest of the most high God. He blessed Abram in verse 19. He then blessed God in verse 20 and then we're told he (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) tithes of all. The question then comes to mind, "who is this Melchizedek?" Hebrews 7:1-3 says, **"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."** For many years, it was my opinion that he was Jesus Christ Himself. I have come to realize that he was a type of Christ instead. Let me quote from "The Struggle for the Birthright" by Dr. Stephen Jones (God's Kingdom Ministries, 6201 University Ave., N.E., Fridley, MN 55432) to help clarify this. Dr. Jones is giving evidence that Melchizedek is Shem. Adonizedek was another name for the same person and means "Lord of Righteousness," and became the title of all the kings of Jerusalem long after Shem died. Joshua 10:1 gives us an example. "To show that Shem was the Melchizedek of Gen. 14:18, we will quote from Jasher 16:11, 12, which tells us the story of Abram's meeting with Melchizedek after freeing Lot: ¹¹ *And Adonizedek king of Jerusalem, the same was Shem, went out with his men to meet Abram and his people, with bread and wine, and they remained together in the valley of Melech.* ¹² *And Adonizedek blessed Abram, and Abram gave him a tenth from all that he had brought from the spoil of his enemies, for Adonizedek was a priest before God.*

Many people have misunderstood Melchizedek, thinking him to be Jesus Christ incarnate. Their belief is based upon a misreading of Heb. 7:1-8. Verse 3 says of Melchisedec that he was: **'without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like the Son of God.'** (NASB)

This must be taken in the context of verse 6. Heb. 7:6 says in the KJV, **'But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham.'** The NASB reads, **'But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham.'** In other words, Melchisedec's genealogy is not counted, traced, or RECORDED by the biblical writer, and in this way is he also a type of Christ. It does NOT say that Melchisedec literally had no parents. It only says that he merely appears out of nowhere in the biblical text, with no explanation of who he was or who his parents were. This divine silence in the biblical text was done purposefully in order to make him a type of Christ, that is, **'one like the Son of God.'**

Dr. Jones goes on to point out that Shem lived to be 600 years old and died after Abraham when Isaac was 50 years old. Also he points out that Shem built Jerusalem, therefore he would be its king.

The king of Sodom offered everything that Abram had recovered to Abram except for the people, but Abram refused to keep anything with the exception of the food that his men

had eaten already, as Abram did not want to feel obligated to the king of Sodom in any way.

We have said that the promises God made to Abram were unconditional. We will see why this is the case as we begin our next lesson with Genesis 15. JRL