

Fork in the Road

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[0 : 00] forward and we have the incandescent Irena and the Celestial Celeste helping us. And if I can have my contestants over on this side of our studio, I'd like you to welcome with me, this is Lot, and over here on my other side is Abraham.

You remember Abraham last week, please give it up for Abraham and Lot. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Well, I'd like to welcome you to the game show, Promise or No Promise.

This is the show in which contestants get to choose between trusting the promises of God or taking the money that they see before them. Now, returning from last week and just barely hanging on by his fingertips, we have Abraham.

Now, you remember last week he joined our show and he was offered the opportunity of trusting in God's promises and staying in the land, even though there was a little famine coming along, or he could take the money.

And Abraham took the money and off he went to Egypt. And you may remember that he had a few bad results from that. His wife got taken into Pharaoh's harem and there was some pretty big divine judgment coming down there.

[1 : 07] But he just held on by his fingertips and came back. And he's come back to our studio here right at the altar at Bethel where he was before and it's as if all that didn't happen.

And Abraham has decided to start again. And now he and Lot have come here and they're very rich. They've got herds. They've got cattle.

And they've got silver and gold. And Lot is our new contestant for the day. Lot is Abraham's nephew and he's coming along for the ride.

So he's been briefed on the promises of God. And now we're going to play promise or no promise. Okay, guys, here it is. The clock is ticking. We are in the promised land.

Here it is. This is the land that God has promised. He's promised a nation and he's promised a blessing for the whole world. But you guys have a deal to make because you've got a whole lot of herds.

[2 : 04] You've got a whole lot of herdsmen and they're fighting. And together there just isn't enough room for the two of you and all your herds and herdsmen. So you can't stay together anymore. You're going to have to make a deal.

Are you going to take the promise and figure out how to share the land? Or are you going to take the money? Now the money are the cities on the plain. The Jordan plain.

They're really good cities over there. Look at them. Great nightlife. Kind of wild inhabitants. But, you know, they're great people. It's not exactly the promised land. On the other hand, the promised land, well, it looks a bit dicey.

You know, there's not a lot of room for all you guys. And there's all those Canaanites and parasites. Not to mention some parasites. But this is the land that God promised.

And this is where he said it's going to happen. This is where it's going to be a blessing and a nation. So you're going to have to decide. Your time to play promise or no promise.

[3 : 01] I'm going to give you both a minute to think it over. Abraham, you first. Alas, poor sheepy. What are we going to do? It's too crowded here with Lot and all his herdsmen and everything.

God's promised us the land. And the land he's got is full of ites. If it isn't a Canaanite or a parasite or a Jesuitite, it's probably a Vancouverite. But he's promised us that.

Now, the last time he warned me about promises, I didn't pay attention. And it wasn't really a great thing, was it? So I think I'm going to have to go for the promise.

I mean, he comes through. Now, I don't know how we'll do it because this doesn't look like a friendly place to go to. And we'll have to do something with getting our own together, working amiably with Lot, but we'll do it.

And leave it in God's hands. I think I'll do that. Now, Lot, your turn. Can you hear me?

[4 : 12] Well, I'm just thinking. You know, I love that land. You know, we've been through a lot together. No pun intended.

You know, the cities look great. The land, you know, it's nice and green. He's a kind guy. I know he won't mind if I, you know, and plus if God's going to fulfill his promise, you know, I need to give God an opportunity to do that.

You know, and it's easier for God to fulfill the promise if, you know, we have to start a scratch. Maybe I'll just, you know, promises were made to be broken. Yeah, okay, I think I'm ready.

Okay, gentlemen, time is up. It's time to play Promise or No Promise. Okay, you've been offered a choice between the promised land that God has given you and a nation and a blessing or take the money and run to go to the cities of the plain of Jordan.

Now, what's it going to be? Abraham, what did you choose? Well, I thought about it really carefully, and knowing my success rate in doing it on my own, I've decided to choose the promise.

[5 : 25] Hey, give it up for Abraham. Okay, Abraham takes the promise. Now, Lot, what about you? Man, it's a tough choice. You know, I'm going to go for the money.

Go for the money. You know, the parasites and the parasites and the canine, and all these ites that Uncle A mentioned. I'm going to have to take the money. Final offer.

Hang on, hang on. Can I make a phone call? No, no. Final offer. Abraham, final offer. Go for the money. Okay, I'm going to ask if, first of all, we're going to go with Lot's choice here, and if the Celestial Celeste could please reveal the choice.

Okay, Lot, you're going to get a holiday property in Sodom, and you're going to flee hellfire and brimstone. Your wife's going to be turned into a pillar of salt. You'll be seduced by your daughters, and you're going to live outside the plans and purposes of God.

Give it up for Lot! Here, you might need this. And now let's see what Abraham's choice is. Abraham, what's going to happen for you? You're going to get the land.

[6 : 28] You're going to be the father of a great nation. And out of that's going to come a blessing, which is going to be the Messiah who's going to bring salvation for the human race. Give it up for Abraham! Thank you. Yay! I think that's pretty clear, guys.

I'd say that's Abraham won this round, hands down. Well, thank you very much, everyone, for playing Promise or No Promise. And I'd like to thank the Incandescent Irena and the Celestial Celeste also.

Thank you so much. Thanks, Alfred. Thank you. Thank you. Well, would you turn in your Bibles very briefly to Ephesians on page 180.

And in the second column there at the bottom, at verse 9, Paul writes these wonderful words. He says, For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight, the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for all the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Well, this week we see Abraham growing into a man of faith. He's beginning to learn to look at the situation with the eyes of faith.

[7 : 49] And what that means is, it doesn't matter so much how things look. It matters that God will see his plans and purposes through to the end.

It doesn't matter what he sees with his eyes. He's beginning to trust in the plans and purposes of God. He knew the plans and purposes of God for a land and a people and a blessing.

And so he's beginning to trust that God is going to see those purposes through to the end. He's beginning to learn to trust that God can see his will to the end.

And so that allows Abraham in this story in Genesis 13 to approach this conflict with Lot in a very different way, in a grace-filled way. Maybe he can't see how it's going to work out, but he knows that God's plans and purposes are going to work out.

So he makes us offer it a lot. You go whichever way you like, and I'll go the other way. Now that's trust. Awesome trust. Not so his nephew.

[8 : 54] See, Lot looks at things with his eyes and makes a choice with how things look. And he goes for the money. He takes himself off. And the results for him are quite disastrous.

But you know, the amazing thing about the Bible is that God reveals his awesome, awe-inspiring, amazing plan to human beings. And this plan is huge.

It's cosmic. Macro-cosmic in its dimensions. It spans human history. It spans eternity. That plan which he began at the time of Abraham, which reached its high watermark at the cross of Jesus, which is going to come to its completion when Jesus comes again as King of kings and Lord of lords.

It's an incredible plan. And yet the amazing thing is, he works it out in human lives, on the human scale, in the minutiae of human lives, in a baby who is born, in a meal, in a life, amongst a people.

And it is an awesome thing. He reveals it to us, and he works it out. And that is the faith of Abraham, that somehow and some way, Almighty God will work out his plans and purposes in my life, in our life, in his world.

[10 : 17] They will not be derailed. They will not be halted. And we are heirs of these awesome promises. The same promises made to Abraham, which have continued and will continue until Jesus comes again.

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

And we need to know that. We need to know this as a church this year. That no matter how things look, what matters is that God's plans and purposes will not be thwarted.

And we need to know that in our own lives too. That we are his people. And that his plans and purposes are being worked out in us and through us.

Let's just as we close read that passage, that verse from Ephesians together. And let's take that with us into the year ahead. Verse 9. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

[11 : 40] Thanks very much. Thank you.