

Heirs Of The Promises

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and let's open them up to the book of Genesis. Book of Genesis. If you don't have a copy of God's Word with you, that's okay. We have them in seat backs nearby, but I do encourage you to have a copy of God's Word open in front of you as we walk through the passage together.

It's been a little bit since we've been in the book of Genesis, and we're picking up at an absolutely crucial point of the story here at the end of chapter 11 going into the beginning of chapter 12 with God's call to Abram and the promises that God makes to Abram.

So our passage is Genesis 11 verse 27, and we'll go through chapter 12 verse 9, and we will stand in just a moment. But keep your seats for now because I want to jog your memory a little bit of where we've been so far.

You may remember that the book of Genesis is structured around 10 sections, and we've kind of planned our breaks and our stops around these 10 sections.

And they each begin with, these are the generations of. And so when you see that as you read through the book of Genesis, that's a pretty good indicator that the narrator is shifting you to a new section of the book.

[1 : 17] And so we've seen the generations of the heavens and the earth in chapter 1 as God created all things. We saw the generations of Noah, the righteous man, as God flooded all the earth, one righteous man, Noah.

And we saw briefly the generations of the sons of Noah with Shem and Ham and Japheth. And then specifically we focused in on the generations of Shem in chapter 11. And now we're coming to the generations of Terah.

And from the end of chapter 11 all the way through about chapter 25, Genesis zooms in on one of Terah's children, Abraham.

And it's pretty staggering when you think about the scope of the book of Genesis, how it begins this universal, broad perspective of all the earth. But very quickly now we are zoomed in on one family, one line.

And really we're focusing in, we're following, we're tracing one promise. Remember God made this promise to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.15 that he will send a snake crusher, the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent.

[2 : 30] And this morning that promise gets clarified that we see he will be one of Abram's offspring. So, and now that we're all caught up, let's stand, if you're able, in honor of the reading of God's word.

And I'll read from Genesis chapter 11 verse 27 through chapter 12 verse 9. Now these are the generations of Terah.

Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans.

And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

Now Sarai was barren. She had no child. Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife.

[3 : 30] And they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country, and your kindred, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your

name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him.

Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.

When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land.

[4 : 43] So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.

And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on, still going, toward the Negev. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

Let's pray. Father, we pray that you would speak now through the preaching of your word. And we pray that you would help us to see how great are the promises that you've made to us in Christ.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. There's an old song, and I'm sure you know it, that deals with our passage this morning.

And it goes something like this. Father Abraham had many sons. Many sons had Father Abraham.

[5 : 49] I am one of them, and so are you. So let's all praise the Lord. Right arm. Left arm. Right foot. Left foot. My aim for us this morning is to help you to see and rejoice in the truth that if you are in Christ Jesus by faith, then you are a son of Abraham.

And you can sing that song and praise the Lord. That's the aim this morning, is that we would see that if you are in Christ Jesus by faith, then regardless of whether you are ethnically Jewish or Palestinian or Russian or American, whether you are white or black or rich or poor, young or old, if you are in Christ by faith, then you are a son of Abraham and an heir of the promises God makes to Abraham here in Genesis chapter 12.

I want us to see how good this is because sometimes we have this tendency where we tend to read promises like this in the Old Testament as if we were some uninvolved third party reading off somebody else's will.

And so we read the promises in a disinterested sort of way, thinking that these are for somebody else. They have nothing to do with me. I want you to see this morning that this is yours in Christ.

That these promises are yours in Christ. And so we ought to read passages like this with expectation and excitement that, praise God, these promises are coming to us if we are united to Christ by faith.

[7 : 48] So let's look at our text this morning. I want to ask three questions of our text this morning. Three questions. This will be our outline if you're taking notes. Question number one is what is promised here?

What are the promises? What's being promised? At the end of chapter 11 here, it transitions us to the story of Abram. Terah took his family and settled in the land of Haran.

That would be somewhere kind of modern day Turkey. And you remember earlier in chapter 11, if you were here for this, the Tower of Babel. All the peoples of the earth are spread abroad.

God scattered them to the ends of the earth. But here in chapter 12, we see something extraordinary happens. Out of all the peoples of the earth, God speaks to Abram.

Out of all the peoples of the earth, the word of the Lord comes to this one man, Abram. That is unusual. We should recognize that this is unprompted and unusual.

[8 : 50] And even how unlikely Abram is to be a candidate for the word of the Lord to come to him. Who is Abram that God should speak to him? Who is Abram?

What's so special about him that God would reveal himself to him? He's old for one. He's childless for another. And Moses makes sure that we know that his wife Sarai is barren.

And more than that, Abram at this point in his life, he's a pagan. Abram does not worship the Lord. His hometown Ur of the Chaldeans is known for paganism.

There is nothing special about Abram. He does not know the Lord. Why does God speak to him? This call is sheerly by the grace and sovereign will of God.

That's how it is anytime God calls anybody. We see it all throughout the scriptures. God chooses. God reveals. God speaks of his own will, of his own initiative.

[9 : 50] And often he speaks and often he calls what from the outside perspective looks like unlikely candidates. So Paul, later on as he writes to the church in Corinth, as he looks around at them, at these unlikely converts, he reminds them how unimpressive they are from a worldly perspective.

He says, consider your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

Why? So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. God. We're here at the onset of the life of Abram.

And we need to be reminded that everything we're about to see from chapter 11 to chapter 25, everything that we read about this great man of faith, this great father of the faith, this great hero of the faith, all of it from beginning to end is God's work.

[11 : 04] God speaks. God calls Abram. And what does he say? Verse 1, chapter 12. He says, It's a little harder to see it in our translation, but there's actually two commands given here.

Two commands. The first one is the obvious one. It's go. God says, Go. Go leave this pagan place. Go leave everything that you know.

Go leave your father's house. Go leave what's familiar. Leave what's comfortable. And as you go, command number two, Be a blessing. These two commands.

Go and bless. Each command comes with its own set of promises. Three promises for each command. He says, Go and I will make you into a great nation.

Promise number one. Go and I will bless you. Go and I will make your name great. And as you go, Bless. Bless and I will bless those who curse you.

[12 : 30] Bless and I will curse those who curse you. Bless and in you, All the nations of the earth will be blessed. And as we hear that promise of blessing, Blessing, Blessing, Blessing to Abraham and through Abraham to the ends of the earth, We ought to stop and realize how out of place that is in the book of Genesis up to this point.

Do you realize, Do you remember the problem that we're encountering here in Genesis?

Remember where we are. Sin has wrecked the relationship between God and man.

Adam and Eve once enjoyed the blessing of God. And Adam and Eve, They were meant to bless the world. But instead of obeying the command of God, What happened?

They disobeyed. They rebelled. They sinned against Him. They brought curse rather than blessing into God's world. And so everything from that point of sin in the garden up until now, It's all been pretty depressing, hasn't it?

This is not a positive story up to this point. Curse has been the theme so far. Adam and Eve are kicked out of the garden paradise.

[13 : 47] Cain, their son, murders Abel. Lamech murders a man for striking him. He boasts of it. All the earth is wicked in the sight of God. And so all the earth is wiped away in a global flood of His wrath.

All the peoples of the earth are filled with pride. And so the Lord scatters them to the ends of the earth at the Tower of Babel. But right in the midst of this darkness is a ray of hope.

A ray of light in the midst of this curse God has promised to bless. And we see now how He's going to do it.

He's doing it through Abram. Now, I realize that we're reading history here. We're a long way removed from the text and what we're reading this morning.

But we should remember, church, that you and I live in the same world as the world of Genesis. The same curse of sin that explains all of the rebellion, all of the evil, all of the hardship, all of the thorns and the thistles of the world of Genesis, also explains all of the horrible things that happen in our world today.

[15 : 03] The curse of sin has not yet gone away. In fact, it seems like everywhere we look, all we see is the effect of sin. We watch the news.

We see nation warring against nation. We see families torn apart by addictions. We see marriages falling apart because of selfishness and pride and lust and covetousness.

We see sickness and death everywhere we look. And we might be prone to wonder, where in the world can we look to find blessing rather than curse?

God tells us we look to the promise of God. He's already promised all the way back in Genesis 3:15. His plan, his eternal plan, is to send an offspring of the woman to crush the head of the serpent and undo all the effects of the fall.

And now that promise gets clarified. Here with this promise to Abram, it gets a little bit more focused. He tells us here his plan is to bless the world through Abram.

[16:20] In the midst of this darkness and hopelessness and the curse of sin, God promises blessing in place of cursing.

Where there are thorns and thistles, he now promises a new place, a new promised land. Where all the enemies are all around in the land.

Now those enemies, they become God's mission field. They too can be blessed in Abram. The snake crusher we see here will be an offspring of Abram.

And we know on this side of the cross who that is, don't we? The offspring of Abram is Christ Jesus. And it is in him, through him, that we find blessing rather than cursing.

It's in him, and in him only, that all the nations of the earth can be blessed. Do you see God's plan of redemption here? This is incredible hope that God gives to Abram.

[17:23] But of course, from a fleshly perspective, there's some problems to work through, aren't there? Abram is old. He's childless. Sarai is barren.

The land where God calls him to go, that's enemy territory. It's occupied by the seed of the serpent. How in the world will God do what he promised? Naturally, if this were me, I would have a ton of questions.

I would want to see the whole picture laid out before I took a step. But for Abram, God speaks, and that seems like it was enough, doesn't it? Look at how he responds here.

This is our second question. Second, how does Abram respond to the promises? How does Abram respond to the promises?

To put it in a word, Abram responds to God's command and to God's promise with faith. Faith.

[18:23] He believed the word of the Lord. He trusted in his promises. That's what faith is. Faith is trust in the promises of God.

Paul says in Romans chapter 4 about Abram, he says, No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God. But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

He trusted that God was able to do exactly what God promised. That's what faith is. And he shows that faith, he demonstrates it in two tangible, visible ways.

Because the thing is, faith is invisible, isn't it? We cannot see faith. Faith is an internal thing, is an invisible thing.

It's not a tangible thing. Faith, trust, is not seen until it is manifested in some sort of action. You might imagine a little kid standing at the edge of a pool.

[19:35] And dad is in the deep end. His arms stretched out and he says, Trust me, I'll catch you. Come on, jump, trust me. I'll catch you. You just run, you come on, I'll get you.

I promise I will catch you. That child's trust, it's invisible. It's not seen until the moment when he runs off the edge, jumps out over the water, and lands in his father's arms.

That's faith in action. So look here with me. Abram's faith is seen in two visible ways here in our passage. Obedience and worship.

Obedience and worship. Look there to verse 4. And here we see Abram's response of obedience. Verse 4 says, So Abram went.

As the Lord had told him. And Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran.

[20:37] And they set out to go to the land of Canaan. The Lord commands Abram to go. And what does he do? He goes. And God doesn't even tell him where he's supposed to go on the front end.

God just says, get up and go. And I'll show you once you get moving. And so in faith, Abram goes. His faith is demonstrated, manifested.

It's shown forth in obedience. Hebrews 11 verse 9 says, By faith, Abram went to live in the land of promise. That's one way we see his faith.

The second here is his response of worship. Look there to verse 5. Abram's faith is demonstrated. In worship, verse 5 says, When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh.

And Moses adds this ominous note that at that time, the Canaanites were in the land. Now that's a problem. But when we read that, those are the enemies of God's people.

[21 : 42] We ought to kind of hear the Jews theme playing in the back of our head, right? That's a problem. Now, these are the ones that Noah cursed. And they're the seed of the serpent here in the promised land.

And on top of that, the oak of Moreh. That's the Canaanite shrine. That's a place of pagan worship. This is enemy territory. But no sooner does that threat appear, than God again speaks.

And he gives Abram a little reassurance here, doesn't he? He promises to your offspring, I will give this land. So what does Abram do in response?

He builds an altar. Verse 8. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and I on the east.

And what does he do there? Again, he builds an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. He worships. Verse 9. Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negev.

[22 : 44] And if we look ahead to chapter 13, we see in chapter 13, what does he do there? He builds an altar by the oaks of Mamre. Why is he doing this?

What's going on? Why is Abram just going all over the place, setting up altars? What is he doing? Abram is reclaiming pagan land for the kingdom of God.

Abram is planting a flag in the ground and taking back enemy ground from the enemy.

He is chopping back the thorns and the thistles that have come because of Adam's sin. And he is clearing out the land to make it a new Eden. A new place of worship.

A new meeting place for God and man. He looks around at all the enemies of God all around him. He looks around at all of their pagan shrines. And he says, you know what?

[23 : 42] This looks like a good place to plant a flag here for the Lord. This looks like a perfect place for me to worship the Lord. I think I'll set up shop. I think I'll worship right here.

Right beside a Canaan pagan shrine. Abram raises up a place of worship for the Lord. Church, do you realize that that's exactly what we're doing here at Seaweed Bay?

Do you realize that we, like Abram, have been called out of darkness and into a special relationship with the Lord, sheerly by his own choosing, nothing of our own volition, nothing of our own worth, not by our doing, sheerly by the sovereign grace of God, we have been plucked out of belonging to this world and called to belong to him.

Do you realize that we, like Abram, have been given a commission to obey? Christ Jesus has commanded us to go into all the world.

And as we go, we are called to bless the world by making disciples of all nations, by preaching the gospel, the good news that the snake crusher has come and he has lived and died and risen.

[25 : 04] He's done everything needed to peel back the curse of sin. The promised blessing for the world has come in Christ and you can receive it by faith in him. Like Abram, do you realize we are called to go and reclaim enemy territory for the kingdom of God by preaching the gospel and making disciples?

And as disciples are made, what happens? The church is built. And all over this fallen world, all over this formerly enemy territory, churches are raised up and established.

Now you think of some of the most unlikely places where you can think of a church being there. The unlikeliest places in the world to find a group of Christians. They are either there now or they one day will be.

There are churches in communist China, churches in North Korea, there are churches in Somalia, churches in Iraq, you have churches meeting in schools, you have churches meeting in bars, you have churches meeting in walking distance from mosques and abortion clinics and kingdom halls. We are an outpost of God's kingdom here in enemy territory. And we are called by God to go and bless the world by preaching the gospel.

[26 : 31] As we do, we see this grip of the enemy peeled back, the effects of the curse undone. We are reclaiming enemy territory for the king.

I'm getting ahead of myself. Because we need to ask another question, don't we? Question number three. How do we get in on these promises?

How do these promises made to Abram come to us so long ago, such a foreign territory, such a distant promise in an Old Testament?

What does this have to do? How do we get in on this? Because I don't know if you realize it or not, but looking around, I don't think any of us are Jewish. None of us are physically, by lineage, by descent, Jewish descendants of Abraham, according to the flesh.

And so how can any of us sing our song? You remember our song? Father Abraham had many sons. I am one of them. Are you really? And so are you.

[27 : 41] How do these promises come to us? Church, they come to us by faith in Christ, who is the promised seed of Abraham.

The promises come to us by faith in Jesus, who is the fulfillment of all the promises of God, who is the promised offspring of Abram, who will bless the world.

This is where I'm so thankful for a completed Bible, where we can turn to the pages of the New Testament and see how the New Testament authors understood these promises. Because there's layers here to this promise made to Abram.

There's always layers. What we need to understand is that God's one eternal plan of redemption for his one redeemed people unfolds progressively through covenants.

And of course, yes, we know that Abram's children, by physical descent, the Jews, they were given the physical land of Canaan. They were brought out of Egypt.

[28 : 53] They were brought into the promised land. That promise was fulfilled in the Old Covenant. That's one layer of fulfillment in a physical place, Canaan, for the physical descendants, the Jews, in the Old Covenant.

But the New Testament broadens our understanding, teaches us to see another greater fulfillment. It teaches us to look to Christ and see all of the promises of God fulfilled in Him. And then through Him, given freely to all His people who are united to Him by faith.

Let me take you to a couple passages to help us understand. Now you can turn there with me if you like or just mark it down for later, but two key passages here that I want us to see.

The first is Galatians chapter 3. The second is Romans chapter 4. Galatians chapter 3 first. Cindy read some of this for us already this morning. Let me read it to you again.

[29 : 56] Paul says in verse 7 of Galatians chapter 3, Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

In the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preach the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed.

So then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. Did you hear that? God preached the gospel to Abraham in this promise here in Genesis chapter 12.

The gospel, the blessing that comes to the world is the gospel of Christ. It's the removal of sin's curse. And how will that happen? Back to Galatians verse 13.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

[31 : 10] How does blessing come to the world? It's through Christ, the son of Abraham. Christ becomes a curse for us. He takes our curse and gives us his blessing.

He takes our sinner's death and gives us his resurrection life. How? It's received by faith in him. Keep going. Verse 16.

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. What's the question? Who's his offspring, right? It does not say to his offsprings, meaning many, but referring to one.

And to your offspring, who is Christ. And here's the point down in verse 29. If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring.

Heirs according to promise. Romans 4. This promise rests on grace and is guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring, not only to the adherents of the law, that's the Jews, but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

[32 : 27] That is it is written. I have made you the father of many nations. John Piper says it like this.

From the very beginning, God had in view that Jesus Christ would be the descendant of Abraham and that everyone who trusts in Christ would become an heir of Abraham's promise.

He goes on. Faith in God's promises, or as we would say today, on this side of the cross, faith in Christ, who is the confirmation of God's promises, is the way to become a child of Abraham.

Do you hear the good news, church? If you are in Christ by faith, friend, you are blessed and you will be blessed beyond your wildest imagination, both now and into eternity.

Think of all the blessings that come to you in Christ. Think of how blessed you are to know Jesus. It is in Christ Jesus that the great blessing of the gospel comes to us by faith.

[33 : 47] Blessings like justification. How can a sinner be declared righteous in the sight of God? How can any of us stand before a holy God and hear the words, you are innocent?

None of us can claim that in our own self. We are justified by faith in Jesus. We are declared righteous sheerly by His effort, not by our own.

The blessing of adoption as sons. Adoption as children of God that comes to us through faith in Jesus. Blessings like sanctification, to be made more holy, to grow in Christlikeness throughout our life, to reflect the holiness of God that comes to us by faith in Jesus.

Blessings like glorification, the blessed day when you and I will finally be made perfect, body and soul. We will be made like Christ.

How does that happen? It comes to us by faith in Jesus. Blessings like peace, joy, and righteousness, and love, and assurance.

[35 : 03] These blessings come to us by faith in Christ, and Christ alone. Blessings like the certain hope of a true promised land to come where there's no sin, no curse, no pain, no trials, no death, no guilt, no sorrow, no tears, where all the earth is better than Eden, the new heavens, and the new earth.

How will we inherit this? It is by faith in Jesus. God gives you all of this in Christ. Christ. These aren't just blessings to us, church.

It is also through us that these blessings come to the world as we go about sharing the good news of the gospel.

Through us, these blessings come to the world. And through us, as we share about the good news of Christ, enemies of God are adopted into the kingdom.

And ground is claimed for the kingdom of God. Friend, the application here this morning is obvious, isn't it?

[36 : 25] Put your faith in Jesus. Put your faith in Christ and receive all of God's promises in Him.

Put your faith in Christ, faith that demonstrates itself outwardly in obedience and a life of worship.

Put your faith in Jesus and rejoice that in Him you are blessed beyond your wildest dreams.

Put your faith in Jesus and put your hope in the city to come. Put your faith in Jesus and rejoice that you're not just a son of Abraham. By God's grace, you are a son of God adopted by His grace.

Put your faith in Christ and read all the promises of God with eager expectation that they are yours in Christ Jesus. God has made incredible promises to us in Christ to be received by faith.

Friend, are you living in light of these glorious promises? Are you walking in the obedience of faith?

[37 : 41] Are you responding in worship for all that He's done for you in Christ? are you a child of Abraham? I want to propose a second verse for our song as we close.

It goes like this, Father Abraham has many sons. Many sons has Father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you. So let's all praise the Lord.

Father Abraham had one son. one promised son had Father Abraham. All God's promises are yours in Him.

So let's all praise the Lord. Father, we rejoice that all the promises of God find their yes and amen in Christ.

All the blessings of the gospel are ours if we are united to Christ by faith. And so we pray Lord for those that don't know you would you grant them the gift of faith right now.

[38 : 52] And for those that do Lord lead us to rejoice in the blessing of knowing you, the blessings of the gospel, this unearned, unmerited, unfavored. Lord, we have nothing to claim in and of ourselves to say we're worthy of these promises but surely by your goodness and your grace you have chosen to give them to us in Christ.

We love you Father we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.