

# Abraham

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[ 0 : 00 ] do this. By the way, my name is Alex. If we've not met, I'd like to meet, and I'll be here all summer with the Sunday school. So last week we talked about God creating the world and then human beings messing it all up. And right at the end, we had talked about how even after the fall, God has this continuing fatherly kindness towards the humans, and that ultimately leads him to launch this rescue mission to save the world from the disastrous consequences of the fall. And today we pick up on that mission that God kicks off. And perhaps strangely, perhaps unexpectedly, it all starts with this one guy from the middle of nowhere, Abraham. So in Genesis 1 through 11, you have creation of the world, everything falls apart, and then there's story after story of things just falling further and further into disrepair.

There's a story of Noah and the flood. God even goes as far as to destroy everything in the world except for one man and his family. Just dreadful, scary consequences of sin. And yet, out of nowhere, we get Genesis 12. And by the way, if you don't have a Bible, you should get one because I don't have all the quotes on here. So out of nowhere, Genesis 12 begins, 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 already we see this man Abram, he's renamed Abraham later on, but for convenience,

I'll just call him Abraham. Hearing this word from the Lord and just obeying. Paul later on in Galatians calls Abraham the man of faith. And already from this first episode we see with him, he is exercising faith. And so I think by looking at Abraham's life in a few episodes this morning, just a few vignettes from his life. I think we can learn something about the nature of his faith and consequently also the Christian faith, our faith.

So God comes to Abraham with these startling promises. Right? God will make Abraham a great nation. He'll make his name great. He'll bless him.

And God will make him a blessing to all the families of the earth. All the families of the earth. God will make him a blessing to all the families of the earth. All the families of the earth. And the word blessing brings to mind something we read last week, Genesis 1.28, when God creates human beings and blesses them. What's going on here is God is saying to Abraham, I'm going to bless you and you will be the conduit through which I will restore this original blessedness of the world to the whole world. It's through this one guy from the middle of nowhere who is a nobody on the world stage. He's completely insignificant in world history apart from the call. And God says, I'm going to use you in order to save the whole world, restore the whole world, restore blessedness to every family of the earth.

[ 4 : 22 ] The world or his people? All the families of the earth. You mean people from all tongues and nations? That's not the whole world though. The whole world without respect to ethnicity or people group. All the families of the earth.

Yeah. And do catch that. Sometimes we can think of the Old Testament as just the story of the Jewish people or just the story of Abraham and his descendants. But from the very beginning, it's not just about Abraham and his descendants. It's about the whole world. Even though Abraham's a nobody. So sometimes I talk about faith with my grandfather. His faith is sort of ambiguous. I don't really know what he believes. I'm not sure he does either. But sometimes he'll say to me, you know, the universe is so big.

There are absolutely unfathomably enormous. So many planets, so many stars expanding at this incredible rate. Uh, why would God who made all of that care about some tribe in the middle of nowhere?

It seems to me, grandpa would say to me, uh, that the stage is, is far too vast for the drama. Um, and I think he's right. I think he's actually getting to something really significant there.

Uh, for him, it's a reason why he's not really sure about the Christian faith. But I say back to him, no, that's precisely why the Christian faith is so incredible because God chooses what is low and despised in the world, even that which is not in order to bring to nothing things that are so that no one can boast before, before God, as Paul writes in first Corinthians. And we see that beginning here in, in Genesis 12, Abraham's a nobody. He's not even worshiping God. He's a pagan, but then God calls him out of that. Um, but then it comes at a cost. Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house. Uh, Abraham cannot enjoy these unbelievable promises without abandoning all his other commitments, uh, his homeland, his family, his manner of worship. Uh, he's told to leave everything and go to this strange foreign land. Um, and we're just told that he does it, uh, walking by faith and not by sight to, to use some of Paul's words. Uh, this is, this is stunning, right? Um, it reminds me of how Jesus calls his disciples in the gospel. Uh, and they just leave everything behind. They, they leave their boats and their nets and even, uh, their family and just follow him. Uh, we're, we're not told that they deliberate about it. We're not told that

[ 7 : 12 ] Abraham deliberates about this, that he's agonizing about it. He just, he just does it. Would you call that irresistible grace? Uh, I'm not going to use words like that. Because that's a deep rabbit hole. Uh, that's a conversation for another time. Um, but I think that teaches us something about faith. Um, but we'll let's, let's move on. I think we see a lot of pictures of faith in, in Abraham's life. So he leaves and he goes to this land, uh, this foreign land. And then, uh, let's pick up in, in chapter 15. Uh, Abraham has another encounter with God as if the previous promises weren't enough, as if it weren't enough that Abraham would be the conduit of blessing to the whole world. Uh, God escalates the promises even more.

Um, and, and we're, we're going to read the whole chapter and there's two encounters with God here. Uh, each time God promises something, Abraham questions it because it's, it's just so startling.

Uh, and then God replies with, with assurance. Um, so let's, let's read it. Um, after these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, fear not Abram, I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, Oh Lord God, what will you give me for? I continue childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, behold, you have given me no offspring and a member of my household will be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, look toward heaven and number the stars. If you were able to count them. Then he said to him, so shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.

But he said, Oh Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it? He said to him, bring me a heifer, three years old, a female goat, three years old, a ram, three years old, a turtle dove and a young pigeon. And he brought him all these, cut them in half and laid each half over against the other.

But he did not cut the birds in half. And when the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram and behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon them. Then the Lord said to Abram, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there. And they will be afflicted for 400 years. But I will bring judgment on the nations that they serve.

[10:04] And afterward, they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You will be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying to your offspring, I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, to the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Cadmonites, et cetera, et cetera. So there's the promise of children. As many as it stars in the sky. And without any further assurance than just God saying it, Abraham believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. If you're familiar with the letters of Paul, this one verse is a really big deal for Paul. By virtue of Abraham's faith alone, it seems, God accepts him and makes this covenant with him. Paul writes in Romans, but the words, it was counted to him. We're not written for Abraham's sake alone, but for ours also, it will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead, Jesus, our Lord. So this, this dynamic of just faith in God resulting in this, this acceptance, um, and embrace, uh, this covenant, um, is not just for, for Abraham, but it's, it's, it's an example. It's a pattern for us now today too.

Uh, and then there's the promise of land, uh, which is perhaps even more stunning because at this point, Abraham is just this wanderer living in, living in a tent. Uh, and God says to him, you're going to own all of this land. Uh, and then Abraham asks me, how am I going to, how, how am I to know that this will happen? Uh, and then there's this elaborate ritual, uh, where Abraham cuts these animals in half and, and, and sets the two halves with a path in between them. Uh, and we might read this and think, what the heck is going on? Uh, well, the, the ritual is a kind of, of self curse. Uh, whoever passes through it is effectively saying, let me be like one of these dead animals split in half. If I don't follow through on my promise, if I don't follow through on what I, what I say I'm going to do.

Uh, and the startling thing is that God passes through the animals, right? It's, it's, uh, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch. Uh, smoke and fire is, uh, symbolic of the, the presence of God. Um, I think I have a verse there from, from Exodus. You have the, uh, later on in the Exodus, you have a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. Uh, it's the same in, in there, it's symbolic of God's presence. Here it is to, uh, smoke and fire. And God is passing through the, the animal saying, uh, let me be like one of these dead animals. If I don't follow through on my promise to give you the land. Uh, this is, uh, uh, an unconditional promise. Uh, just God granting the land irrespective of anything in Abraham, it seems, uh, there's no obligation put on Abraham here. God just promises it.

That's, that's stunning. It's stunning generosity. Um, but then keeping that in mind, uh, so last week we talked about how there's two creation accounts. There's two creation stories in Genesis one and then Genesis two, and they give us a little bit different pictures of God. Uh, and then you put them together and you see a fuller picture of who this God is. Uh, that's some of what we talked about last time. Well, similarly, we have a second covenant making story. We have this covenant making story in Genesis 15, and then we have another one in chapter 17, uh, where it begins, uh, verse 10 when Abraham was, let's start in verse one.

[ 14 : 21 ] When Abraham was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him, I am God almighty walk before me and be blameless that I may make my covenant between me and you and may multiply you greatly. Uh, and then, uh, a little bit later, um, in verse 10, this is my covenant, which you shall keep between me and you and your offspring after you. Every male among you must, uh, must be circumcised. So first we're told in chapter 15, unconditional promise, no obligation is put on Abraham. He just believes God's promise. Now in chapter 17, God says, be blameless in order that I may make my covenant with you. And also you, you and all of the males in your household had better be circumcised because if you don't get circumcised, you're cut off from the covenant.

So putting these two covenant making stories together, we might wonder, uh, what gives, you know, what is this covenant? Is it, is it unconditional? Like, like we, we, uh, like chapter 15 seems to suggest, or is it contingent on Abraham's blamelessness and circumcision? Uh, as here in chapter 17.

Uh, we'll explore that a little bit more because it, it, it heightens even further in chapter 22. But, uh, before we get there, um, any, any questions so far?

Great. Okay. Um, but before we get to chapter 22, um, later on in chapter 17, uh, there's this child promise to Sarah. Uh, so in chapter 15, we're, we're told God promises Abraham many descendants, but that's not necessarily a miraculous promise. Um, because God didn't say who the mother would be, uh, of, of Abraham's descendants. Uh, now we're told the mother's going to be, uh, Sarah, who is far too old to have children naturally. Um, and, and we read in, in Hebrews 11, by faith, Sarah herself received power to conceive when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Um, so then, uh, even though this, uh, miraculous promised child Isaac is born, uh, in chapter 21, um, God had made all of these startling, amazing promises to Abraham. Uh, you're going to be the conduit of blessing to the world.

I'm going to make you the father of many nations. You're going to have innumerable descendants. Uh, I'm going to give you this land. Now, um, in chapter 22, uh, there is this startling, uh, chilling, uh, chilling, even horrifying term. Um, we're not usually in this, in this Sunday school series going to read so much, so many entire chapters in the Bible, but Genesis 22 is really an important one. So, so let's read, um, this whole story.

[ 17 : 54 ] After these things, God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, here I am.

He said, take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the, on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and his son, Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.

Then Abraham said to his young men, stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son. And he took in his hand, the fire and the knife. So they both, so they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father, Abraham, my father. And he said, here I am, my son. He said, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. So they went both of them together.

When they came to the place of which God had told them, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, here I am. He said, do not lay your hand on the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place. The Lord will provide. As it is said to this day, on the mount of the Lord, it shall be provided. And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, by myself, I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

[ 20 : 32 ] And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned to his young men and they arose and went together to Beersheba and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Have any of you been horrified or chilled by this story before?

Nope. I always found it a little bit disturbing. Yeah. Because the question always comes, you know, to you, well, did you go through with it?

I mean, people think about their children and they wonder, you know, could I do this? I don't have to do it through myself. If I did, I'd be like, I don't know. I just don't know.

Yeah. And would it even be right to go through with it? That's a question I ask myself sometimes. If the Lord commands you to, but people hear voices.

[ 21 : 35 ] Yeah. You wouldn't do that today, though. You wouldn't do that today. That was a one-seller. Yeah. I think that might be right.

I think that's probably right. Did it with Abraham or did it with Jesus? We'll get to Jesus. This is, so there's this quote I pulled from a book by this 19th century philosopher, Kierkegaard.

And he wrote this whole book all about this chapter. And I think it gets to the heart of what is so chilling about this chapter. So the Lord was only mocking Abraham, mocking him by giving him this promised son, Isaac.

He wondrously made the preposterous come true. Now we wanted to see it annihilated. All was lost. Seventy years of trusting expectancy. The brief joy over the fulfillment of faith.

The fulfillment of faith being this promised child, Isaac. Who is this who seizes the staff from the old man? Who is this who demands that he himself shall break it? Who is this who makes a man's gray hairs disconsolate?

[ 22 : 41 ] Who is this who demands that he himself shall do it? Is there no sympathy for this venerable old man? None for the innocent child? After all of this stunning generosity, God becomes, for a moment, a horror to Abraham.

He commands Abraham to do something that is abominably evil. It's not just that God is telling Abraham. Sometimes you might hear Genesis 22 preached in some sermons.

And someone will say, well, Abraham gave up, offered up to God what he loved the most. Therefore, we should offer up to God what we love the most. And that is true. But at the same time, it's not just that Abraham is giving up what he loves the most.

But it's that he's murdering. And it's not just that he's murdering. But it's that God is contradicting himself, it seems. All of these promises that God made to Abraham depend on Isaac.

How can Abraham be the father of innumerable nations if Isaac dies childless? How can Abraham's descendants receive the promised land if he has no descendants? How can Abraham and his family be God's conduit of blessing to the whole world, all the families of the earth, if he has no family?

[ 24 : 04 ] And yet, Abraham obeys. He has faith in the God who contradicts himself. And he's only restrained from murdering his son at the very last moment.

This is a chilling text. And yet, I think there are some things that we can learn from it. Especially about the nature of faith.

About Abraham's faith and our faith. We see here at the end, because you have done this, I will surely bless you.

Sort of like in chapter 17, God's blessing here seems to depend on Abraham's obedience. So one might wonder, does it depend on Abraham's faith?

If he believed God and God counted it to him as righteousness? Or does it depend on Abraham's obedience, even to the point of nearly sacrificing his son?

[ 25 : 13 ] And I think the answer is yes. I think it's both together. Because I think what this story tells us about the nature of faith is that faith isn't just believing some true things about God.

Or even just believing in God at all. Or even just believing the gospel. But faith is a kind of personal fidelity. Or a personal loyalty to the promise-making God.

And that loyalty includes, results in this kind of radical obedience. To leave your family. To Abraham, right? To leave your family, your kindred, your homeland.

Even to follow through on this chilling command in chapter 22. James, in the New Testament, reflects on this episode in Genesis 22.

By saying, Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works. And faith was completed by his works.

[ 26 : 22 ] And the scripture was fulfilled that said, Abraham believed God. And it was counted to him as righteousness. Abraham's faith in the promise-making God was fulfilled.

Was brought to completion by his radically following God's commands. And I think that's true for us today as well.

That's what James argues, at least, in the New Testament, reflecting on this episode. But then what about these commands?

Offer him there is a burnt offer. Luckily, there are no commands quite so chilling for the church. It's like Raul was saying.

That was a one-time thing. One moment. Though Jesus' commands to us in the gospel can sometimes feel illogical or absurd or confusing.

[ 27 : 24 ] It can definitely feel difficult for us to obey. They're not chilling to this same degree. And yet, they can be really difficult for us to obey.

I think part of what this chapter asks us about the nature of faith is, will we obey even the illogical, confusing commands that are given to us?

To give one example that is particularly illogical and confusing in today's America, commands in scripture about sexual ethics seem completely ridiculous.

One might say, if they've grown up in this culture like I have, one might say, well, why does God care about whether I sleep with my girlfriend?

It doesn't hurt anyone. This command is illogical and absurd. And yet, it is a command that's given to us. I'm sure in your own life you can fill in the blank on commands given to us in the gospel that just don't make sense to us.

[ 28 : 33 ] The prohibition from eating from the tree. Why does that make sense? Why? Because God said so. That's why it makes sense. Right. So that's what it comes down to.

And I think, yeah. So... But you wrote something over here that says, though Jesus' commands in the gospel are not morally evil, like this one to Abraham.

Yeah. It can't be morally evil, because if God told Abraham to do something morally evil, then God is evil. So it's not morally evil. Yeah, we're getting into some heavy philosophy now.

What I mean... On the face of it. On the face of it. That's what I mean there. It's not worth it. Yeah. And this is murder. So however deep we've got to go to, you know, put that together in our minds, at least we can agree that on the face of it, people can rightly say, yeah, there's an appearance of immorality.

So... God appears to contradict himself. Yes. Yeah. I think that's putting it well. Thanks. Yeah. Yeah. Appears to. One moment.

[ 29 : 44 ] You were raising your... Yeah, I was just going to comment. Hebrews 11 kind of talks through what Abraham was thinking as he made the sacrifice. And it says, he reasoned with himself that God could raise the dead.

So, that's it. God could turn creation inside out and upside down before one of his promises would ever fail. So, he was willing to go through with it because he'd never seen some of you raised from the dead.

He's like, but surely God's promises cannot fail. But Isaac stayed dead. And I think it's just an example of his personal loyalty toward God, that he knew that no matter what happened, the promise that he made back in Genesis 12 was not going to be empty.

And he can always make a second kid. But he said it would be Isaac specifically. Ah, very good. Yeah. Yeah. And yeah, that's a good note about Hebrews 11. And we even see that in this story here.

Which verse is it? Abraham says to the young men, he brings along with them, I and the boy will go and worship and then come back to you.

[ 30 : 52 ] So, it's, what's going on in Abraham's head there? This text doesn't tell us anything about what's going on in his head, which is maddening.

I'd love to, I'd love to get a psychological picture. He couldn't say, well, you know, well, I'm going up to sacrifice my son, so, you know, he didn't want to, you know, let him know what he was up to.

I mean, it would have sounded absurd to the men. Yeah. So, was he, was he, was he trying to be deceptive with the men? Or, or was he perhaps, perhaps, possible. Or was he perhaps, like Hebrews 11 says, reasoning in his mind, well, God might even just raise Isaac from the dead.

Because that's the only way that this could be not contradictory. That I would kill my son and yet he would be the son of promise. Maybe he was just thinking, he's not going to let me go through with this. Maybe he was just thinking that, you know.

Yeah. So, it's an impossible thing now, but, I mean, I wouldn't think that he would make the world. I mean, if I were at Abraham Hughes, I'd be like, no, he's got to be kidding, you know.

[ 31 : 54 ] Right until that point, you know, actually we have to make the cut. You know. Yeah. I don't know, I could believe he would want, want to do something. In this, in this text, because it tells us so little about, really nothing about what's going on in Abraham's head, it, it is, uh, rich soil for these kinds of, of, uh, meditating on, on the nature of, of Abraham's faith.

Um, yeah. when it, when he goes to our, mother and son, uh, at the last moment, he'd be strained, right? Yeah.

Do you think, this is good? Uh, we're, we're not really told. We're at least told, the angel, so verse 11, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham.

Abraham. So, if he's calling twice, with, saying his name twice, that means it's really, really urgent. Abraham, Abraham. Um, so, maybe, maybe restraining his hand, maybe just shouting at him, I, I don't know.

Um, there, there are, uh, this chapter is so striking that there are a lot of artistic depictions of this, uh, paintings of this. Uh, I, I, I know of one painting where Abraham has the knife raised, and the angel grabs his hand.

[ 33 : 14 ] Um, I don't know who painted that. I would have put a picture on here if I remembered. But, yeah. Uh, any other thoughts? Yeah.

Um, going back to the weeks about James, um, and the completion of Abraham's faith, um, are you thinking that is, because in, verse, uh, um, well, it says, do not lay your hand on the boy, do you have any commitment?

For now I know that you fear God. So, when you say that is completion in the sense that God is now satisfied with your faith, or completion in that it is in you working and building up your faith, and maturing your faith, and bringing it to what God has designed to be Christ-like to any extreme.

Hmm. I don't know if those are the only two options, but yeah. I haven't thought about that. Uh, what do you think? Uh, well, it seems that God would not be surprised by our works, and whether or not our works demonstrate our faith.

Hmm. Um, and certainly the works, like, obedience builds our faith in a feedback kind of way.

[ 34 : 50 ] So I would say that at least it's that, um, that maybe, I don't know, there are also ways that God seems to interact in a responsive way to people in Scripture.

Hmm. Hmm. So, maybe there is also a dynamic of, yeah, I want to see this from you. Not that I just know it's going to happen. I'm kind of, like, pressing play on a, on a, a track and just watching things unfold, but, I don't know.

Yeah. I, I think it might just be that I haven't thought about a lot of things enough. Um, but I think that, uh, texts like this and, and figures in Scripture like Abraham leave us with a lot of, of mystery.

Um, I think it can, and leave us, uh, with the impression that God is, uh, a great, God is not like one of us.

Uh, God is a great deal more, uh, incomprehensible and mysterious than, just a little bit more. Just a little bit more, maybe, yeah. Um, okay.

[ 36 : 09 ] God will provide for himself the land. Uh, God has this pattern, and, and we see it starting here, and it's a pattern throughout the whole rest of the Bible, of substituting one life for another.

Uh, instead of Isaac being sacrificed, instead it's a ram. Um, and then, uh, later, this happens at the temple in Jerusalem.

So, we're told that this, that this incident with the, the near sacrifice of Isaac happened in the land of Moriah. Well, later on, I think I give the reference there in 2 Chronicles, we're told that, uh, the temple, uh, where, where sacrifices are made to God, the temple was built in the same place, at the land of Moriah.

Um, and then ultimately, uh, Jesus is, is the son, um, the son of promise, sacrificed for the sake of the world.



Um, in the horror of whose sacrifice exceeds even, even this chapter. Uh, you know, God says to Abraham, now I know that you fear God, seeing as, how you did not, uh, withhold your son, your only son, from me.

[ 37 : 29 ] Now, uh, on, on this side of the cross, we can say to God, now I know that you love us, because you have not withheld your son, your only son, from us. Um, so we see this pattern of, of one, one life substituted for another, in, in God's, um, plans for the world, to, to save the world, uh, from sin.

And then, in your offspring, we're told at the end here, in your offspring, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. One. Uh, now before, in Genesis 12, God says to Abraham, through you, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Now we're told, more specifically, through your offspring, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Um, so who is this offspring of Abraham?

We might, we might wonder. Uh, cause we have the whole story now. Uh, and if it's through the offspring that the whole world will be blessed, who is the offspring? Uh, what we're told in, in Galatians, Paul, Paul reflects on this and said, well, the offspring has to be Jesus.

Uh, because Jesus is a descendant of Abraham, after all. And Paul writes, now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. Now it does not say to, and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and to your offspring, who is Christ, Paul says.

[ 39 : 01 ] Uh, Jesus is this offspring of Abraham through whom blessing comes to the whole world. Um, and yet, uh, in the very same chapter in Galatians, uh, Paul suggests that not just Jesus, but we collectively as God's people are, are the offspring of Abraham.

um, Paul writes, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. Uh, so when, when Paul is, is meditating on this promise to Abraham at the end of Genesis 22, he, he seems to be saying, well, uh, Jesus is preeminently the one, the, the, the, the promised offspring who blesses the whole world.

Um, and yet, there is also a responsibility for, for us, uh, as Christ's people, uh, as fellow offspring of Abraham. Uh, are, are we, do we think of ourselves as Abraham's offspring?

Uh, do we think of ourselves as, as, uh, God's people in the world through whom God wants to, to, uh, bless the world? Um, do we have that, that outwardly, uh, centered, outwardly directed mentality of thinking, the, the reason I am Christ or a big part of that is to, uh, to do good for the world, to, to be a conduit of blessing for my neighbor.

[ 40 : 38 ] Um, so I think we see that here as well and I, and I think, uh, I think that's where we can, we can leave off, um, in, in this story of Abraham's life.

Uh, that we have this promised son who, who blesses us in the whole world and we can work with him to be part of that blessing. Um, before, before we pray and head upstairs, uh, we have a few minutes for, for last thoughts and, and questions.

Did you want to say something more about how you resolve the tension between this question you've raised and, my, the covenant seems to be unconditional and yet here it seems to be conditional.

How, can you give us some suggestions as to how we might put that together, preserving the truths of, of both, but integrating them? Yeah. Um, first of all there are no contradictions.

Yeah, so, yeah. Tensions, I say. Tensions. Um, so personally, personally I'm a big fan of letting tensions just sit there in scripture.

[ 41 : 50 ] Uh, and just, sort of like how we talked about last week with, with the two creation stories. One, God is this, this exalted, uh, transcendent voice from off stage and then the second one God has dirt under his fingernails.

Uh, and you just let those sit together. Uh, personally I'm a big fan of that, that approach of just letting them sit. But not everyone is. Uh, and there, uh, there are some who say, well, uh, Abraham received all of these promises, all these blessings just by virtue of his faith.

And yet, a faith that is genuine will never be just believing things. But a faith that is genuine will always lead to, result in, uh, this kind of radical obedience to God.

Um, and that's, and that's how the two can fit together. I think, I think that makes a lot of sense. He never received God's promises though. He died. He didn't go to the promised land.

Uh, yeah, he never got to, he never got to own the land. No, it's just as God promises him 400 years later. Yeah.

[ 43 : 05 ] He's had him now though. The promises are fulfilled for him now because Abraham's with him. Yeah. Yeah. Thanks, Sean.

That was, uh, um, any, any other parting thoughts or questions? Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I think actually, um, it's offspring which you, um, which you point out as a singular word.

It's not really a singular word. I think it actually means, um, many people because offspring is plural word, just like people. So the fact that we say the people doesn't mean that it's one person but people is plural word.

Offspring is also plural word. I don't think it means just one person and Christ is part of a whole chain of an unbroken chain and we are part of it because I just said in the last sentence, I think that it was the last sentence because it grabs a much more clearly that we have it, um, we have the responsibility to that because we are actually people in the of this plural word, I mean, all of us, everyone and everyone after us because of black hole change because of this in the middle and I don't think, as you said, we had only one offspring Yeah.

I used to, yeah, uh, when I was first reading the letters of Paul as a new Christian, I got really frustrated at this part in Galatians.

[ 44 : 32 ] It's like, offsprings isn't a word, Paul. And I thought, well, there might be something going on in the, in the Greek that we're just not seeing in this translation. So, uh, the word there, offspring, and, uh, I don't actually know the Greek word there, but I know that the Hebrew word in, in the Genesis 22 is a singular word that can have this collective meaning.

Yeah, and in the Greek also. Okay. Um, and, uh, and Paul knew that. Yeah. And yet he said what he said. So, I don't understand, but, uh, you know, I think there's something deeper there.

Save us, Greg. I'm surprised in the Scrabble Dictionary, a collective word. But if you take that word, an offspring, could either be taken as a collective noun, but it can also indicate a single offspring.

Right. There is the semantic range that would allow Paul to discern and see the meaning in each, which is what he does. Yes. It just seems that he uses the grammatical argument, you know, in a way that doesn't sit well with some ones.

But I think that all of the Holy Spirit do more than I do. Right.

[ 45 : 58 ] He has it both ways in the same. Paul says one thing and then Matthew says something else in the New Testament and they just have to find kids. Paul says both of these things. So, Paul can both say the promises are made to Abraham's offering.

singled. I mean, clearly he's pointing out it has to be fulfilled like Christ is central to the fulfillment of the offering promise. But then at the end of the chapter he can say if you belong to Christ you're also a parent's offspring.

So, like, I think Paul, and I don't think Paul forgot when he wrote half a chapter ago. I don't know, somehow Paul said all those things together.

Maybe the single, whatever, singular noun with the collective reference. Yeah, I think ancient people are much more comfortable with tension than we are.

All right, it is time for us. So, let's pray. Father, thank you that you have adopted us into Abraham's family and that just as he is the father of a multitude, and the father of faith, the man of faith.

[ 47 : 17 ] Thank you that you want to grow in us that same kind of faith who, which leads your people to abandon any commitment secondary to you, that you might be our chief commitment.

man. Thank you that you have given us this offspring, Jesus, to be this incredible blessing to the world, undoing the effects of sin.

And I pray that you would form us to be those offspring of Abraham through whom blessing comes to the world, that we might be a blessing to our neighbor.

through Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.