

GOD'S CALL AND PROMISE!
GENESIS CH12:1-3

ILLUSTRATION

The theme of Genesis is creation, sin, and re-creation. It tells how God created the world as very good, but that it was destroyed in the flood as a result of man's disobedience. The new world after the flood was also spoiled by human sin (Ch11). **The call of Abraham**, through whom all the nations would be blessed, gives hope that God's purpose will eventually be realized through Abraham's descendants (Ch49).

Genesis is about beginnings and generations. Starting with the divine ordering of creation, it follows for many generations **a family line** that takes the reader from Adam to Jacob and his sons. **This family line** forms the backbone of Genesis, links its disparate (so unlike one another) elements into a cohesive whole, and explains the distinctive literary features that set it apart from other Old Testament narrative books. We could see the overview as follows:

1. **THE FOUNDATION - CH1-2**
2. **THE FALL - CH3-5**
3. **THE FLOOD - CH6-9**
4. **THE FOOLISH TOWER - CH10-11**
5. **THE FAMILY - CH12-50**

Genesis is also a book of instruction, and this is why Jews include it in the Law, for the Hebrew word Torah, usually translated "law", has the broader sense of "instruction". It can rightly be considered the "First Book of Moses" because of its role as the prelude to the following four books, Exodus to Deuteronomy which are structured around the life of Moses. Genesis divides into two major sections:

1. the primeval history of the world before Abraham (Ch1-11);
2. the history of the patriarchs (Ch12-50).

The proportions of the two sections are significant: essentially chapters 1-11 are setting the stage for the main drama, **namely God's dealing with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons-the subject of chapters 12-50**. One of the hallmarks of Genesis is the heading or title "**These are the generations of**" (2:4; 5:1 with slight variant 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2).

Each heading functions like a zoom lens, by focusing attention on a smaller part of the total picture that has been shown in the preceding section, and the heading thus serves as an introduction to the following section. As Genesis describes how the earth's population increases over many generations the reader's attention is constantly being directed toward one particular **person in each generation and his descendants**.

GOD'S PROMISE OF LAND! V1

V1 - "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.'"

When did God call Abram? Whilst he was in Ur of the Chaldeans, not Haran (Ch11:27-32)! Remember!

1. **Gen Ch15:7** - 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."
2. **Joshua Ch24:2** "And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor, and they served other gods'!"
3. **Neh Ch9:7** - "You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham."

4. **Acts Ch7:2-4** - And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living."
5. **Heb Ch11:8** - "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going."
6. God spoke to Abram whilst he was an idolater in Ur of the Chaldeans, to obey Him and leave his homeland!
7. **Like Noah in Ch6:22, Ch7:5, Ch7:9 and Ch7:16** which emphasise that Noah did all that God commanded him to. Likewise, Abram immediately obeyed and went! Abram put his complete trust in this God, without, at this time, seeing the fulfilment of God's promise!

What does Abram have to leave?

1. *Leave his country!*
2. *Leave his family!*
3. *Leave his father's house!*

Abraham is commanded/invited by God to leave the above mentioned 3 aspects of his known life and security, with sheer vagueness as to where he was going, as Canaan had not yet been mentioned to him!

Kent Hughes states that "When Jesus calls us, He does not guarantee the future or even tell us what it will be like. He does promise that He will take us to be with Him – which is the ultimate land! He does promise forgiveness and inner peace. He does promise that He will be with us through thick and thin. He does promise our ultimate good. But Jesus does not say that it will be smooth here on earth. He does not say that your problems will be solved. Nor does He promise a life of peace and ease. If you are looking for these kinds of up-front promises before turning to Christ, you will never get them. And if you persist in your requirements, you will never come to Christ. He calls you to trust His Word alone" (Cited in Kent Hughes, Genesis, pg 183).

GOD'S PROMISE OF A GREAT NATION AND GREAT NAME! V2

V2 - "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***." ***How can this be, if Sarai is barren? Ch11:30! Also, the 8 previous generations had all had children by the time they were Abram's age, because of God's determination back in Ch6:3! It's a double "whammy!"***

- When Shem is 100 and he fathers ...
- When Arpachshad is 35 he fathers ...
- When Shelah is 30 he fathers ...
- When Eber is 34 he fathers ...
- When Peleg is 30 he fathers ...
- When Reu is 32 he fathers ...
- When Serug is 30 he fathers ...
- When Nahor is 29 he fathers ...
- When Terah is 70 he fathers ...
- Abram is 75 years old, Sarai is 65 (10 years younger than Abram – Gen Ch17:17) and is barren!

Abram is being tested! And in some ways passes God's test of faith, by leaving Ur of the Chaldeans his country. However, he takes his father and his nephew with him, Terah and Lot.

1. ***Was he meant to?*** No! Abram's faith needs growing! Like us and tests will come to strengthen, broaden and deepen our faith!
2. ***Does God compromise on His promise to us, if our faith is compromised?*** No!

God keeps His promise, did you know that the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians all honour Abram and his name?

In Islam, Abraham, called Ibrahim in the Quran, is honoured for his obedience and submission to Allah and is considered one of the prophets. As one of the most frequently named persons in the Quran, Abraham is called a friend of God and an example for all mankind.

“God's promise that Abram would become a great nation assaulted reality, because Abram was childless and Sarai was barren—a painful reality in antiquity and doubly painful in the throw-away world of Ur. Abram was asked to believe in the dark. And more, Abram was promised that he would not merely become a great people but 'a great nation'! The Hebrew word here for nation is 'goy', which is a word used frequently in the Old Testament to describe the Gentile nations of the world (Cf 10:5, 20, 31, 32). Today the Hebrew word for Gentiles is still 'goy' (singular) or 'goyim' (plural). Abram's offspring would be a goy among the goyim—a powerful political entity, with a land and language and government. Believe that, Abram!” (Cited in Kent Hughes, Genesis, PG 183).

More importantly, Jesus will come from Abram's lineage!

GOD'S PROMISE OF BLESSING AND CURSING! V3

V3 - ***“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”***

I would like to try and address the issue of Israel's relation to the “Promised Land” in the Middle East. The Arab roots and the Jewish roots in this land go back for thousands of years. Both nations lay claim to the “Land” not merely because of historical presence, but also because of what both nations claim to be “Divine Right.” If God's Word is inerrant (perfect, without flaw) and we hold God's Word as our ultimate authority and truth in which all things should be framed, what does the Bible have to say about this issue, “The Land?”

What we think about this issue, and what we say about this issue really does matter, as it is a emotive and supercharged issue within our society! We also need to know how to pray.

What we see in Scripture, is that Israel as a whole, that being, as an ethnic, corporate people, enduring from generation to generation has a root in the Covenant Promises made to Abraham and his descendants. However, in relation to the gospel, Israel (since the coming of Christ and currently) are “enemies of God for our sake”, the apostle Paul says in Romans!. In other words, they are rejecting their Messiah and thus putting themselves against God.

This is what Jesus said to Israel in John Ch8:42 “If God were your father you would love me for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but He sent me.” But Israel does not love Jesus as God's one and only Son and her Messiah! So they are, for now, “enemies of God.”

“If God chose the forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for Himself, and set them apart and made to them Covenant Promises, then someday (after this present time of enmity and hardening are over) their descendants are going to return to God through Jesus Christ, and become God's set-apart, holy people. Unbelief and ungodliness will be banished from Jacob forever!

So now we ask, is the so-called “Promised Land” part of the inheritance and salvation that “all Israel” will receive? And if so, what does that say about the rights of Israel today to the Land?

Genesis Ch15:18 “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, the river Euphrates.’”

Then in Genesis Ch17:7-8 God says to Abraham, “I will establish my covenant between me and

you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

Then God confirmed the promise to Jacob, Abraham's grandson, in Genesis Ch28:13 “And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.’” And when Jacob was dying he called Joseph to him and said in Genesis Ch48:3 “And Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.’”

This, of course, creates a huge cleavage between the Islamic view of God's covenant and the Jewish and Christian view of God's covenant. But we believe that this is God's Word, inerrant and perfect! The land is destined to be Israel's land.

But it's not that simple.

“This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.” Being born Jewish does not make one an heir of the promise—neither the promise of the Land nor any other promise.

This was plain in the Old Testament, for example, in the terrible list of curses that God promised to bring on the people if they broke his covenant and forsook him was this: “ And as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it” (Deuteronomy Ch28:63).

Remember, also, that nations which gloated over Israel's divine discipline were punished by God - Isaiah Ch10:5-13. So the promise to Abraham that his descendants will inherit the “Land” does not mean that all Jews inherit that promise. It will come finally to the true Israel, the Israel that keeps covenant and obeys God, by turning to God's Son, the Messiah, Jesus!

When Jesus asked His disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered to him, “ Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” Matthew Ch16:15-17. And when the high priest asked Jesus, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” Mark Ch14:61-62.

But even though Jesus was the Messiah and did many mighty works and taught with great authority and fulfilled Old Testament promises, nevertheless the people of Israel as a whole rejected Him. This was the most serious covenant-breaking disobedience that Israel had ever committed in all her history.

Israel has broken covenant with her God and is living today in disobedience and unbelief in His Son and her Messiah. That is why Paul says in Romans Ch11:28, “As regards the gospel they are enemies of God.

For those of us who believe the Bible and trust Christ as our Saviour and Lord, we should not give blanket approval to Jewish or to Palestinian actions on their claim for “The Land.” We should;

1. Approve or denounce their actions according to Biblical standards of justice and mercy among peoples.
2. We should encourage our politicians to seek a just settlement that takes the historical and social claims of both peoples into account.

3. Neither peoples should be allowed to sway the judgments of justice by a present “Divine Claim” to the “Land.”
4. Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile believers in Christ will inherit the “Land.”
5. Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians will not fight over the “Promised Land” because the entire new heavens and the new earth will be ours, according to 1st Corinthians Ch3:21-23 - “So let no-one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.”
6. All followers of Christ, and only followers of Christ, will inherit the earth, including the Land.