



AUTHORED BY RIVERVIEW CHURCH

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RIVERVIEW'S MISSION IS TO MAKE SACRIFICIAL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WHO GROW, SERVE, AND GO.



INTRODUCTION

"Genesis" comes from a single Hebrew word that means simply, "In the Beginning." What a fitting title for the first book of the Bible! This volume doesn't just mark the beginning of God's written word to his people, but it tells the story of the beginning of the world, the beginning of the people of God, the beginning of sin, and the beginning of God's plan to ultimately save the world through Jesus.

We produced this study guide primarily as a resource for our Life Groups, to be used alongside our weekend services messages (which can be downloaded for free at RivChurch.com). Our hope is that Life Group leaders will be able to use these materials to more effectively lead discussions and that members will be able to come to those discussions more prepared. While this material can be used for individual study, we believe it will be most helpful when discussed with other people.

Some may think this material is over their heads and others may believe it isn't deep enough, and that's OK. Your group can cover as much or as little of the content as is helpful and there's lots of extra material included for those who want more study. Ultimately, our prayer is that this study guide will help you develop a framework for how to work through a passage of Scripture and ask the all important questions:

What did this passage mean to the original audience?

What does this passage mean (in a universal sense)?

How does this passage apply to my life right now?

It's amazing to me how many people are involved in the production of a small book like this one. PASTOR JAMES GRANGER led the charge on this project, along with PASTOR PAUL DENHERDER, JUSTIN DETMERS, BRAD KIDDER, MELISSA KRANZO, and BEN LUETHY providing both writing and editing along the way. Ï

RYAN FREITAS and JOSH MICHELS worked late into the night on the design work to meet seemingly impossible production deadlines.

A special thanks goes out to PASTOR MARK DRISCOLL from Mars Hill Church in Seattle who graciously allowed us to reprint his "ANSWERS TO COMMON QUES-TIONS ABOUT GENESIS" and "HOW TO READ GENESIS" from his previous work, GENESIS: MEDITATIONS ON MOSES' MOSAIC.

I sincerely hope that this volume enhances your study of the first half of the book of Genesis and helps you grow in your understanding of God's magnificent power and grace. More than anything, I pray that you will more deeply grasp the gravity of sin and the immenseness of God's plan of salvation. Every page of Genesis (just like any other every other page of scripture) points like a giant flashing arrow to the person and work of Jesus.

May our lives do the same.

PASTOR NOEL HEIKKINEN riverview church

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FROM Stylistically, Genesis is one of the finest pieces of literature MARK DRISCOLL that has ever been written as evidenced by the fact that its stories, images, and metaphors remain perennially popular some three and a half thousand years after they were penned. Practically, Genesis is one of the most painfully honest accounts ever written about the life of a single family over many generations. Historically, Genesis provides for us the account of the origin of everything from Creation to humanity, sin, sex, family, death, and Resurrection. Theologically, Genesis reveals God as personal through His intimate involvement in the lives of His covenant people by loving them, protecting them, leading them, forgiving them, protecting them, and disciplining them.

> Genesis, the book of beginnings, is the first book of the Pentateuch, which means five-part book that also includes Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy which are often referred to in Scripture as one book (e.g. Second Chronicles 25:4, 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Mark 12:26).

Genesis accounts for about 25% of the content of the Pentateuch. The remaining four books of the Pentateuch, Exodus through Deuteronomy, focus on the life of Moses and account for about 75% of the content of the Pentateuch. The men are an interesting juxtaposition as Abraham did not have the law but obeyed it by faith, while Moses did have the law but was punished for not obeying it in unbelief. Each of the books in the Pentateuch was penned by Moses roughly 1400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. To help you better understand the book of Genesis I will briefly answer some of the most common questions about the book. But, I would stress that reading comments about Genesis, mine included, are at best a supplement to simply reading Genesis repeatedly and prayerfully for oneself.

WHAT IS GENESIS?

The name of the Bible's first book, Genesis, is taken from its first words, "...In the beginning..."

Genesis is a book about God. And, while this simple premise might seem self-evident, it remains a fundamental truth that is often overlooked by its critics. In Genesis God is revealed as our Creator who judges human sin but sustains people and Creation by His grace. Genesis is also clear that God is not responsible for human sin because He is perfect, holy, good and all that He originally created was made "good" including the man and woman whom He declared to have been made "very good". Two primary names for God appear throughout Genesis, which has lead some Bible critics to conclude that multiple authors penned the book. This is inaccurate. Rather, when Genesis uses the name Elohim it often refers to God in general relationship with all nations, including unbelievers. And, when Genesis uses the name Yahweh it often refers to God in His special covenant relationship with His people.

Genesis is comprised of various types of literature, including narrative, poetry, law, and genealogy. And, the events in Genesis span such a lengthy time period (roughly 2000 years) that it may cover more history than the entirety of the rest of the Bible. Lastly, Genesis is a selective theological telling of history intended to not give us an exhaustive history as much as a theological lesson through historical people and events recorded as interpreted facts.

HOW IS GENESIS ARRANGED?

Genesis is brilliantly arranged according to multiple compositional forms. I will share a few of them with you to assist you in getting an understanding of the layout of this great book.

First, Genesis 1-11 records God calling Creation into existence, and Genesis 12-50 records God calling people into covenant relationship.

Second, both the major and minor sections of Genesis are introduced by the

refrain "This is the account of..." The major sections beginning with this refrain are found in 2:4, 6;9, 11:27, 25:19, 37:2. And, the minor sections within the larger sections that begin with this refrain are found in 5:1, 10:1, 11:10, 25:12, 36:1. Third, Genesis is arranged according to the revelation of God as is outlined below:

GENESIS | - 2 God is the Creator

GENESTS 31 - 64 God is the just judge of sinners and savior of His people

GENESTS 6.5 - IIg God punishes sin and rewards repentance

GENESTS 110 - 2518 God calls people into covenant and promises to bless them

GENESTS 25:19 - 28:9 God provides for His people to fulfill His promises

GENESIS 28:10 - 36:43 God elects and protects

GENESTS 37 - 50 God is the Sovereign who accomplishes His purpose despite human sin

Some critics have postulated that Genesis is not literal history but rather a myth, like a legend or fairy tale, intended to communicate ideals but not meant to be taken literally as fact. But, this hypothesis has a number of flaws that I will briefly mention.

First, the concept of myth or legend is completely foreign to Hebrew thought and life. Second, Genesis is consistently organized around historical places, events, and people (including many lengthy genealogies) which is completely unlike the telling of a myth. Third, when the rest of Scripture, particularly the teachings of Jesus, speak of people, places, and events in Genesis they are treated as straightforward fact and not myth. Therefore, the concept of Genesis being a myth is an imposition on the book by its critics that is not warranted from the book itself or the rest of Scripture which points back to Genesis as literal historical fact.

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE GENESIS?

Genesis records the beginning of Creation and human history. However, Genesis does not record what happened in eternity past as Moses chose not to tell us about such things as the creation of angels, fall of Satan, or what the eternal God was doing before Creation. Therefore, it would be a mistake to view Genesis 1 as the beginning of history as it is instead an explanation that creation comes from God and was made habitable for human life.

But, before Creation and mankind there was history independent of creation; before energy, time, space, or what we know of as the material world was brought into existence, God existed. And, the rest of Scripture gives us some clues as to that part of history in eternity past which preceded human life.

In Genesis 1:26 we read, "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." Here is a reference to the Trinity which is the one and only God who exists equally as the three persons of Father, Son, and Spirit. And, it is this personal Trinitarian God who existed in eternity past before the creation of the world or humanity in a perfect and harmonious relationship of love and communication. This is important to note because other religions that wrongly do not believe in the Trinity are prone to believe that God made mankind because He was lonely, insufficient, and longing for relationship. But, the Bible teaches that God is not with any need and is a personal God complete with love and relationship in His very nature.

In the New Testament we do get some glimpses into what preceded Creation in eternity past through the words of Jesus, Paul, and Peter.

In John 17:5 Jesus says, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

In John 17:24 Jesus says, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

Ephesians 1:4 says, "For he chose us in him before the cre- ation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight..."

First Peter 1:20 says, "He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."

Second Timothy 1:9b says, "...grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time..."

Titus 1:2 "...a faith and knowl- edge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time..."

Therefore, before the creation of the world and mankind in eternity past God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit dwelt together in glory and love. Additionally, God the Father chose God the Son to execute the plan of salvation by coming to earth to die for the sins of His people and rescue us from Satan, sin, and death. And, this plan of salvation that was executed by the Son was devised by God the Father before Creation and before we sinned. In this we see that though God is not responsible for human sin, He also was not taken by surprise when our first parents sinned, but rather foreknew it would occur and had already devised a plan to remedy our sin by redeeming us through Jesus.

WHO WROTE GENESIS?

An academic debate has raged over the authorship of Genesis. And, to answer the question it is best to learn from Jesus because He is the most preeminent and trustworthy teacher by virtue of His deity, sinless life, and perfect instruction. Jesus did teach that Moses was one of the authors of Scripture (Mark 7:10). Additionally, Jesus taught that Moses wrote the Law which included the book of Genesis in John 7:19 when He said, "Has not Moses given you the law?" And, in John 7:22 Jesus said that "Yes, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it came from the patriarchs but was recorded by Moses), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath." Packed into this verse we discover that circumcision as was instituted in Genesis 17:12 by the Patriarch Abraham was written by Moses as

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the next verse of John 7:23 calls Genesis the "Law of Moses". Therefore, Moses is the author of the first book of the law, Genesis. Lastly, John 1:17 echoes this saying "For the Law was given through Moses..."

Lastly, throughout the Pentateuch there are undoubtedly a few sections that were not originally penned by Moses for two reasons. First, the Pentateuch occasionally mentions other books that contained true information which may have been included in the inerrant books of the Bible (e.g. Genesis 5:1; Exodus 24:7; Numbers 21:14; Joshua 10:13). Second, some sections of the Pentateuch simply could not have been penned by Moses, such as the account of his own death and burial in Deuteronomy 34 which was likely added by Joshua – who was also a Spirit inspired author of Scripture.

HOW WAS MOSES ABLE TO WRITE SUCH A MASTERPIECE?

Genesis is such a rich literary masterpiece that some have speculated that it could not have been penned by a "primitive" man such as Moses, or by any single author. And, while those with the arrogance to believe that a man who lived thousands of years ago could not possibly have the kind of insight that we see surrounding us as well educated people remain fools without wisdom is laughable, there are at least two reasons to believe that the one man, Moses, could and did in fact write Genesis. First, Acts 7:22 says "Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action." Therefore, Moses was not only well educated but also a brilliant and courageous man – the kind of man capable of writing Genesis.

Second, Second Peter 1:20-21 says, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." And, in Deuteronomy 34:9 we also read that Moses was filled with the Holy Spirit which was passed from Moses to Joshua. Therefore, since Moses the prophet was filled with the Spirit of God he was able to know things (e.g. the creation of the earth) that can only be discovered by divine revelation, and able to record them faithfully by God's power.

WHO ORIGINALLY RECIEVED GENESIS?

Genesis was originally written some 1400 years before the birth of Jesus for the people of God who had been enslaved for four hundred years in Egypt, passed through the Red Sea, received the Ten Commandments at the Sinai Covenant, and spent forty years wandering in the wilderness as consequence for their sin. This nation of perhaps a few million people included worshippers of God who were both Jewish and people from other nations that also desired to worship their God (Exodus 12:38).

Genesis, however, was also intended to be read by other generations of people as itself infers. For example, throughout the book of Genesis Moses takes the time to explain to future readers such as us portions of the story that we may not fully understand because we do not share some of the experiences of his original audience (e.g. Genesis 13:10, 35:19).

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR THEMES IN GENESIS?

There are numerous thematic threads that weave Genesis together. However, the major themes of blessing, covenant, land, and seed are most prominent. And, the minor themes of good and evil, children, walking with God, and worship are less prominent though still very important.

BLESSING

First, the word "bless" and its derivatives appear over eighty times throughout the book of Genesis which is more often than any other book of the Bible. Therefore, it seems best to consider God's blessing as the primary theme of the book of Genesis. In Genesis God's blessing includes such things as His presence, children, possessions, long life, friends, and the ability to persevere and prevail. Throughout Genesis the opposite of the blessing is the curse which comes in response to sin and includes separation from blessing and the Blessor, and judgments such as famine, oppression, and exile. God told Abraham that he and his descendants would be blessed by God so that they could bless the other nations of the earth (Genesis 12:2-3). And, God's people were then supposed to mediate God's blessing to others, a fact which is most clearly seen in Joseph who is the great blessing to many nations in the closing chapters of Genesis.

Examples of God's people blessing others in Genesis include the following:

- Laban was blessed by Jacob's presence (30:27)
- Potiphar was blessed by Joseph's presence (39:26)
- The prison warden was blessed by Joseph (39:20-23)
- Egypt was blessed by Joseph during the 7 year famine (47:13-26)
- Other nations were blessed by Joseph (41:56-57)
- Jacob blessed Pharaoh (47:7-10)
- Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons Manasseh and Ephraim (48-49)

The New Testament picks up this theme of blessing and connects it to Jesus Christ who is ultimately the blessing promised to all nations of the earth. This is what Luke records in Acts 3:25-4:2 which says, "And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways." The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead." And, this is what Paul teaches in Galatians 3:14 saying, "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

COVENANT¹

Second, the theme covenant is central to Genesis. Covenant is the word God uses to explain His relationship and promises to such men as Adam (Hosea 6:7; Romans 5:12-21; I Corinthians 15:21-22), Noah (Genesis 6:18, 9:9-17), Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3, 17:2-21, Exodus 2:24), Moses (Exodus 34:10, 34:27-28; Leviticus 24:45), and David (II Chronicles 7:18, 21:7).

The Bible also speaks of covenant relationships not just between people and God, but also people and people (e.g. I Samuel 18:3; II Kings 11:4; II Chronicles 23:1-3; Nehemiah 1:5; Psalm 55:20; Jeremiah 34:8- 15). Perhaps the most sacred human covenant is the covenant of marriage (e.g. Proverbs 2:16, Malachi 2:14b).

The Hebrew word for covenant is "berit."¹ A covenant is a particular relationship that binds people together as one (God and people, or people and people) by promised terms. Biblical covenants are often sealed with ceremonies that include the shedding of blood to show the solemnity of the covenant and to foreshadow Jesus shedding His blood to secure our New Covenant salvation. Throughout the covenants between God and the elect the recurring theme is that He will be their God and they will be His people because He will send Jesus to forgive their sins which is the essence of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; Romans 11:27; I Corinthians 11:25; II Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 7:22; 8:8-13; 9:15; 12:24).

In each covenant there is a "head" who is responsible for the oversight and execution of that covenant. In the New Covenant this head is Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18, 2:10, 2:19; Ephesians 1:10, 1:22, 4:15, 5:23). And, in each covenant there are terms that include consequences for sin which is the violation of the covenant (e.g. Deuteronomy 29:1-29; Joshua 7:11-26, 23:16; First Kings 8:23; First Kings 11:11; Second Kings 17:35-38, 6:14; Psalms 25:10; Jeremiah 11:2-10; Hebrews 10:29).

Therefore, God's covenant with His people is one of the dominant themes that emerges in Genesis and continues throughout the rest of Scripture. And, while modern Christianity speaks of a personal relationship with Jesus, which is necessary, Genesis also highlights the covenant relationship we have with God as part of His redeemed people and not merely an individual who lives and worship in isolation from the rest of God's people. Lastly, it is through His covenant that God seeks to restore humanity and Creation back to its original state and His original intentions through the redemption of both mankind and the rest of Creation.

LAND

Third, an additional theme that appears throughout Genesis is land which is spoken of by various words on some 400 occasions throughout Genesis. Curiously, in an interesting play on words the first man is Adam, and the ground is called "adama"¹ as there is a close relationship between the ground and the man who was made from the dust of the ground. Additionally, the man was made to work the land, but the ground was cursed on account of the man's sin, and the man was expelled from the land of the Garden of Eden. Adam's son, Cain, works the land (Genesis 4:2), and the land cries out to avenge Abel's blood after his murder (Genesis 5:28-29) and a man of the soil (9:20) who builds an ark to save himself and his family from the flooding of the land.

In Genesis there is also the Promised Land which God promised to the offspring/seed of Abraham (12:7, 13:15, 13:17, 15:7, 15:18, 17:8, 24:7, 26:3, 28:13, 28:15, 35:12, 48:4, 50:24). And, surrounding the question of who has the right to possess this piece of land has been an intense theological, political, and military conflict that rages in the Middle East to this day. On one side of the conflict are racial and cultural Jews who range from spiritually Jewish to atheists who claim that the land is theirs because they are the "seed of Abraham" through Abraham's wife Sarah. And since the land was promised to Abraham and his "seed" (or offspring as some Bible translations say) they believe that it rightfully belongs to them. On the other side of the conflict are racial and cultural Arabs who are generally Moslem. They likewise say that they too are Abraham's "seed" through his Egyptian maidservant Hagar. Caught in the middle are a minority of racially Jewish and racially Arab Christians.

At issue is Genesis 12:7 which says, "The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring [seed] I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him." The question from this text is simply, who is the seed/offspring that the Promised Land was pledged to by God? Is it the Jews? Is it the Arabs? Is it the Christians who are descendants of Abraham by new birth and not merely by birth?

And, rather than running headlong into muddied current political debates about the Middle East, we will be well served to keep reading the Bible to see who this seed of Abraham in fact is. First, the seed was first mentioned in Genesis 3:15 as Jesus who would defeat Satan. Second, the seed in Genesis 12:7 is singular and not plural meaning that it refers to the individual person Jesus just as it did in Genesis 3:15 – not the collective plural "seeds" which would refer to the nation of Israel as it does in Genesis 13:13-17 using the word "offspring" in the NIV translation, and 15:13-18 using the word "descendants" in the NIV translation instead.

Therefore, the current debate and war over the land in the Middle East is being fought by Jews and Arabs who, for the most part, do not love Jesus (who is the seed/offspring of Abraham promised in Genesis) and have wrongly interpreted the Bible to believe that they are God's covenant people who have a right to the Promised Land. In fact, the Promised Land belongs to Jesus alone because He is the seed/offspring of Abraham to whom it was promised.

And, while this interpretation may seem scandalous and shocking, it becomes clear if we set our politics aside and continue to read Paul's Holy Spirit inspired interpretation of who this offspring/seed of Abraham is. In Galatians 3:15- 16 it says, "Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ."

Therefore, the seed/offspring of Abraham to whom the Promised Land was pledged is simply Jesus – not any nation of people who do not worship Him as God but would like to use His land to dishonor Him.

Lastly, God is clear that all land, including the Promised Land, is ultimately His and to be given by Him alone to whomever He pleases. In Exodus 19:5-6 God said, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." And, in Jeremiah 27:5 God said, "With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please."

In summary, the Promised Land in the Middle East belongs to Jesus and in the end He will share it with His covenant people who trust Him by faith and love Him by grace (Psalm 37:9; Matthew 5:5). Anyone who is not in covenant relationship with Jesus as the covenant head will not in the end dwell in the Promised Land, even if Abraham is their father, because they instead will dwell in the fiery torments of Hell.

SEED

Fourth, the word "seed" is also a primary theme that appears nearly 60 times in Genesis and only about 170 times in the other 38 Old Testament books combined. The word can be interpreted a number of ways, most often dictated by the context in which it appears. Correspondingly, in the New International Version of the Bible the word is translated descendants, offspring, seed, children, family, grain, semen, line, and people. It can also be used in a singular sense (e.g. Genesis 21:13), or plural sense (e.g. Genesis 28:14) much like our English word sheep. In Genesis there is generally a correlation between a seed and that which produced it which explains why plants and trees make their own kind (e.g. Genesis 1:11-12), and children throughout the book often resemble their parents in attitude and action.

Ultimately, all of the promises and blessings of Genesis given to Abraham and his many seed (those who like him worship God by faith) are fulfilled in Jesus who is the singular seed of Abraham. It is Jesus who is the promised seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15. In Matthew 1:1, 17 Jesus is described as the seed of Abraham through the family line of His mother Mary. In John 8:48-59 Jesus claims to be the God of Abraham and therefore greater than Abraham. And, in Galatians 3:16 Paul emphatically states that Jesus Christ is the promised seed of Abraham through whom all nations of the earth will be blessed. Therefore, Jesus is the promised seed of Abraham and blessing to the nations of the earth.

GOOD AND EVIL

Fifth, the themes of good and evil are woven throughout Genesis and it is clear that good comes from God and evil comes from Satan and sinners who rebel against His creation and commands. The themes of good and evil are typified in the appearance in Genesis 2:9 of the tree of good and evil. To study the themes of good and evil throughout Genesis the following verses will be helpful: 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25, 1:31, 2:9, 2:17, 3:5, 3:22, 4:7, 6:5, 8:21, 13:13, 37:2, and 39:9. And, in beautiful literary fashion Moses resolves the conflict between good and evil in the final chapter of Genesis where we read of God being sovereign over evil in Genesis 50:20 where Joseph informs his brothers that God used their evil for His good saying, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

CHILDREN

Sixth, in Genesis 1:28 we read, "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful, increase in numbers, fill the earth..." And, from this one couple all human beings trace their family origin be- ginning with the growth of human life through Genesis as demonstrated in the family genealogies. Genesis is careful to state, however, that when children are born it is by God's gracious provision of blessing (e.g. Genesis 4:25, 21:1-2, 25:21, 30:22-24). Throughout Genesis children are an important theme which is also highlighted by the lengthy genealogies.

WALKING WITH GOD

Seventh, walking with God is a theme that is important to Genesis. Throughout Genesis we discover that not everyone walks closely with God. Indeed, whole generations such as Noah's, as well as whole cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah, do not walk with God. But, Genesis is careful to make note of those people who did walk closely with God such as Enoch (5:24), Noah (6:9), and (Abraham 15:6).

WORSHIP

Eight, the worship of God is an important feature noted throughout the book of Genesis. Examples include Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all building altars to worship God (Genesis 12:7-8, 13:18, 22:9, 26:25, 35:1-7). Additionally, Noah also offered a sacrifice in worship to God upon exiting the Ark once the flood had receded (Genesis 8:18-21).

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LITERARY PATTERNS IN GENESIS?

Moses, who authored Genesis, provides for us some literary patterns that will helps us make sense of the book if we are attentive to them. Therefore, the following literary patterns that I will briefly mention are given to help inform both your reading and studying of Genesis.

PROMINENT NAMES OFTEN APPEAR TOGETHER

Throughout Genesis it is common to find prominent names spoken of together in couplets. Examples include, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Ishmael, Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers.

NAMES OF KEY PEOPLE OFTEN DESCRIBE MUCH OF THEIR LIFE

Throughout Genesis it is also common that people's names are indicative of their life as God sovereignly bestowed their names. For example, Adam means mankind, Eve means giver of life, Cain means wanderer, Enoch means dedication or consecration, and Isaac means laughter. Therefore, as you study Genesis it will be helpful to get a Bible dictionary and examine the meaning of the names of the prominent people in Genesis.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Another literary pattern throughout Genesis is that sons often follow both the good and bad patterns of their fathers. For example, both Abraham and Isaac pretend that their wife is their sister (Genesis 12:10–20, 20:1–18, 26:1–35). Likewise, Abraham and Isaac both had a dispute with the people in Gerar over the ownership of a well (Genesis 21:22–34, 26:17–25). And, both Abraham and Isaac entered into covenants with Abimelech (Genesis 21:22–34, 26:26–31). Also, Jacob's sons trick the trickster (Genesis 27:1–29), and Lamech is a murderer descended from the first murderer Cain (Genesis 4:1–24). Ultimately, the pattern of children being like their parents is a foreshadowing to the New Covenant in which God the Father adopts us into His family and shapes our character to be like Him once we are born again.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT THE EVENTS IN GENESIS?

Opponents of the accuracy of Genesis are prone to concentrate their criticism on such events as Creation, the Flood, and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, the greatest teacher who has ever lived, Jesus Christ, consistently referred to the Genesis account of people and events as historically accurate. Some examples are listed below:

- Jesus taught that the Creation account of Genesis 1-2 was accurate in Luke 11:50
- Jesus taught that the first marriage account of Adam and Eve recorded in Genesis 2:24 was accurate in Matthew 19:4-5 and Mark 10:6-8.
- Jesus taught that the Genesis 4 account of Cain's murder of Abel was accurate in Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51
- Jesus taught that the flood recorded in Genesis 6-9 was indeed accurate in Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-27.
- Jesus taught that Abraham, who looms large throughout Genesis beginning in 11:26, did actually exist in John 8:56
- Jesus taught that circumcision instituted by Abraham and the patriarchs in Genesis 17:12 was factual in John 7:22-23
- Jesus taught that the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 did in fact occur in Matthew 10:15, 11:23-24 and Luke 10:12
- Jesus taught that Lot, who is spoken of in Genesis 11:27 through Genesis fourteen and again in Genesis 19, did in fact exist in Luke 17:28-32
- Jesus taught that Abraham's sons Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs who appear in Genesis 21 and continue to loom throughout Genesis, did in fact exist in Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28

In summary, it is impossible for someone to simultaneously claim to be a Christian and disbelieve the book of Genesis, because to do so they would need to also believe that Jesus was at worst a sinful man who taught lies, or at best an illinformed, imperfect man who simply made honest mistakes in his Bible teaching.

WHERE IS JESUS IN GENESIS?

Some people prefer the New Testament to the Old Testament because they wrongly believe that only the New Testament is about Jesus. However, it was Jesus Himself who taught that the Old Testament was primarily about Him.

In John 5:39-40 while arguing with the theologians in His day Jesus chastised them saying, "You diligently study the Scriptures [Old Testament] because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me yet you refuse to come to me to have life." And, in John 5:46 Jesus said, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."

Following His Resurrection, Luke 24:27 records an occasion where Jesus opened the Old Testament to teach about Himself saying, "And beginning with Moses [this included Genesis] and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Likewise, in Luke 24:44-45 in speaking to His disciples we read that, "He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses [this included Genesis], the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

Simply, when Genesis is rightly interpreted it reveals Jesus to us. Therefore, to help you see Jesus in Genesis I would like you to note the following references to Jesus in Genesis:

- In Genesis 3:15 Jesus is referred to as the male seed (also translated offspring) of the woman who would crush Satan, and in Galatians 3:16 Paul makes it clear that Moses was speaking of Jesus.
- In Genesis 9:27 Noah prophesies that God would tent with (meaning to come and dwell with) his son Japheth and in John 1:14 we see that Jesus ultimately fulfilled this prophecy when He became a man and pitched His tent among us.

- In Genesis 12:1-7 God promised Abram that he would have a singular seed/offspring that would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth and this descendant of Abraham is Jesus according to Matthew 1:1-2
- In Genesis 14:18-23 Abraham encountered Melchizedek who was the first priest in the Bible and also a king. Since Hebrews 7:1-28 says he had no parents, no beginning or end, was a Gentile and not a Jew, and was greater than Abraham many Bible teachers have believed that Melchizedek was actually an appearance of Jesus before His birth to Mary as Jesus is both our High Priest and the King of Kings. And, while it is possible that Melchizedek was an appearance of Jesus before his birth (a Christophony), the Bible simply does not make this clear so we cannot be dogmatic on this point as it also may have been a man, an angel, or a type foreshadowing Jesus Christ. In any event, we can reasonably assume that at the very least Melchizedek pointed to Jesus Christ.
 - In Genesis 16:7-16 the angel (meaning messenger) of the Lord came and spoke to Hagar, she called that messenger God, and the angel did not rebuke her for worshiping Him which indicates it was probably Jesus.
 - In Genesis 18:1-33 three men visited Abraham who bowed down to one of the men and called him Lord. Abraham then ate with the men before having a lengthy conversation with them about the fate of the sinful city of Sodom which one of the men who is referred to as the Lord stated He was going to destroy in judgment. This likely means that Abraham was speaking to Jesus and two angels.

In Genesis 22:1-19 we see the shadow of God the Father and God the Son as Abraham's firstborn son Isaac was born miraculously years after the promise of his birth was given, that the father loved his son and was to be sacrificed where the temple was built and Jesus was killed by carrying His wood on His own back and willingly laying down His life as a burnt offering which is for sin. According to John 8:56-59 and Hebrews 11:17-19 this foreshadowing was fulfilled in Jesus.

In Genesis 22:11-18 the angel (or messenger) of the Lord spoke to Abraham blessing him and promising to make his seed/offspring (Jesus) a blessing to the nations of the earth. This angel appears to be Jesus because He says that Abraham was obeying Him and that He would bless Abraham.

In Genesis 28:10-22 Jacob had a dream that Heaven opened up to him with a stairway connecting Heaven and earth. And Jesus taught in John 1:51 that Jacob's dream is fulfilled in Him.

In Genesis 32:22-32 Jacob wrestled with God which was likely Jesus.

In Genesis 49:8-12 Jacob's family grew to twelve sons, but it was his fourth son, Judah, whom God chose to continue the messianic line through because he repented of what he had done to his brother Joseph by asking to be taken in place of his youngest brother Benjamin. This promised ruler will bring so much prosperity that men will tie their donkey to a vine without worrying about damaging it since they will be so plenty. At his coming the harvest will be so abundant that people will wash their garments in wine, people's eyes will be dark from drinking much wine, and their teeth white from drinking much milk. According to Numbers 24:17; Hebrews 1:8; and Revelation 19:15-16 this Last Days' king is King Jesus.

HOW ARE MOSES AND JESUS CONNECTED?

In addition to the prophetic promises about Jesus penned by Moses throughout the Pentateuch, including those listed above from Genesis, Moses and Jesus are also connected theologically and relationally though they are separated by some 1400 years. Theologically, Moses was the author of the Law, also known at the Pentateuch. And, Jesus said He came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17). Relationally, while on earth Jesus brought Moses down from Heaven (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8). And, in this wondrous moment Jesus was transfigured upon a mountain as Moses had been upon Mount Sinai while receiving the 10 Commandments in Exodus 34:29-35.

WHO ARE THE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN GENESIS?

Generally speaking, Genesis 1-11 covers the more universal events of Creation, Fall, Flood, and Babel while Genesis 12-50 focus in the history of one family descended from Abraham whom God entered a covenant relationship with. This seeming disconnect between Genesis 1-11 and the family of Abraham in Genesis 12-50 is intentional as Moses is seeking to portray Abraham as the beginning of a new humanity in covenant relationship with God.

In Genesis 12-50 fourteen chapters are about Abraham, three and one-half are about Isaac, eight are about Jacob, and the final fourteen are about Joseph. And, while God clearly loved and blessed this family Genesis painfully portrays their imperfections and sins to demonstrate the grace of God to endure with us, and power of God to write straight lines with our crooked sticks. Examples include Abraham who pimped his wife Sarah to Pharaoh to save his own skin, Jacob who was a trickster, the drunken Noah, and seemingly vain Joseph. Therefore, because of the honesty of Genesis we can see ourselves in the lives it exposes and take hope in the fact that by God's grace we too can be in covenant relationship with Him even though we are equally undeserving of such kindness.

As we read Genesis we realize that God's intention to bless the nations of the earth had to begin with someone somewhere. And, God chose Abraham and what we now know as Israel as the person and place where He would begin His work of redemption on the earth. This does not indicate that a particular man or piece of land, are in any way superior to the other men and places in that day. Quite to the contrary, we know nothing of Abraham's life before God called him other than the fact that he was a seemingly very normal Gentile living near Babylon (Acts 7:2), and that the Promised Land is not as lovely or desirable as many other parts of the earth. But, God started His work of redemption humbly with a simple man in a simple place in the days of Abraham much like He later did when Jesus was born as a seemingly regular man in a simple town.

In the New Testament the significance of Abraham can hardly be overstated. In the great chapter on faith, Hebrews 11, roughly 1/3 of the entire chapter is dedicated to him (11:8-19). In Genesis 15:6 we read that "Abram believed the Lord and he credited it to him as righteousness." This very important verse establishes that salvation and righteousness come not by human merit, but rather solely by faith in God who gives salvation and righteousness as a gift of grace. This concept is exactly what the Apostle Paul taught throughout the New Testament as in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6, where he quotes Genesis 15:6 to establish his doctrine of justification by faith. Likewise, Jesus' brother James also quotes Genesis 15:6 to establish that faith produces good works just like Abraham's faith showed forth in his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac in Genesis 22. Therefore, Paul argues that everyone is saved by faith after the pattern of Abraham in Genesis, and James teaches that if we truly have faith like Abraham our life will include visible good works as his life did.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR NOEL HEIKKINEN

I appreciate Pastor Mark Driscoll's exhortation that "reading comments about Genesis, mine included, are at best a supplement to simply reading Genesis repeatedly and prayerfully for oneself." (p4) It is in that spirit that I want to highlight one important distinction between how Pastor Mark and his church would interpret Genesis and how we would at Riverview. This clarification may seem like a matter of semantics, but it can have significant impact on how you read both Genesis and the rest of the Bible.

We would hold to the position that there exists an important distinction between Israel and the Church that continues from the first book of the Bible (Genesis) to the final book (Revelation).

Driscoll appropriately highlights Jesus as the "seed of Abraham" which is consistent with Jewish belief that all of Scripture points like a giant blinking arrow to the coming Messiah, who we know to be Jesus. However, Driscoll over-applies this point and, as a result, denies the uniqueness of the nation of Israel. In Genesis 15, God makes a unilateral covenant with Abraham and distinctly defines physical boundaries to mark Israel's land for all time. It doesn't matter who lived there then or who lives there now, God has given the land to Abraham's descendants (who are also the seed of Abraham).

We agree wholeheartedly with Pastor Mark that "the Promised Land belongs to Jesus," but so does the United States of America and Djibouti. The difference is, Americans have not been promised this land. That's why we must categorically disagree that Jews who claim the Promised Land as their own "have wrongly interpreted the Bible to believe that they are God's covenant people who have a right to the Promised Land." They are precisely God's covenant people who have a right to the Promised Land. The other portions of God's covenant with Abraham (descendants and blessing) have been literally fulfilled and the final piece (land) will be, too. One day, as we see in Revelation 7, the Jewish people will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and King. As the Apostle Paul reminded us, "Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Romans 11:25,29)

We felt it was appropriate to print Driscoll's article in it's entirety (because most of it is fantastic) and also to highlight this distinctive. Mark and I are friends and have discussed this issue face to face. While we disagree on a few things like this, we agree on so much more and both want to make much of Jesus in our lives and churches.





FROM I want to stress the importance of simply reading the book MARK DRISCOLL of Genesis prayerfully, carefully, and repeatedly for oneself. While the reading of commentaries and related materials such as this book can be very helpful to the student of Genesis, nothing is more important than simply reading the book for oneself multiple times. In reading Genesis it is important to understand some of the most common features about the literary composition of the book. Therefore, the following principles will be helpful in assisting you to extract the most meaning from your prayerful reading of the book.

GENESIS IS TO BE READ CHRONOLOGICALLY

It is very important to note that Genesis unfolds as a narrative written in chronological order with only a few minor possible exceptions. For example, the genealogy of Genesis 10 is placed before Genesis 11 for theological reasons and is not in chronological order. If this simple fact of chronology is overlooked then the cause and effect correlations woven throughout the book will be ignored and the meaning of the book lost altogether. And, if the book is read by imposing any theological system upon the text rather than seeking the intended meaning of Moses who God inspired to write the book then will will likely fail to allow the book to inform our doctrine.

GENESIS IS TO BE READ ESCHATALOGICALLY

Genesis opens with the words "In the beginning..." which leans into the future anticipating the last days and end of history as we know it. And, nearing the end of Genesis in 49:10 we read about the coming of King Jesus who in the end will rule over all nations of the earth and establish His eternal kingdom. Therefore, Genesis which is the book of Creation beginnings points forward to the book of Revelation which is the book of the last days and new Creation ruled over by King Jesus.

GENESIS IS TO BE READ POETICALLY

Genesis is comprised of narrative, law, genealogy, and poetry. And, sprinkled throughout the book are poetic images that require imagination to fully appreciate and understand. Examples include God "seeing" the goodness of His creation (1:2, 1:10, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25, 1:31), God making man with His hands (2:7), a talking serpent (Genesis 3:1), God "walking" with Adam in the garden (3:8), Abel's blood crying out from the ground (4:10), Noah "walking" with God (6:9), God "smelling" Noah's sacrifice (8:21), God as a shield (15:1), Ishmael described as a "wild donkey" of a man (16:12), and Jesus portrayed as a king by a "scepter" and "staff" (49:10). It is important to note that simply because Moses occasionally writes in poetic imagery does not mean that he is being allegorical or mythical. Rather, Moses is communicating in a figurative literal fashion because he is a gifted writer who understands that sometimes an image or metaphor communicates a truth in the most clear, powerful, and memorable way.

GENESIS IS TO BE READ NARROWLY

Genesis is not a record of world history. Rather, it is a selective and theologically arranged history of primarily a family of people and a piece of land. Therefore, as you read Genesis it is important to see the book through a narrow lens focused close up on a handful of people and places. Genesis warrants this kind of reading because it simply does not speak about a wide number of people and places such as the great nation of Texas which does not appear anywhere in the book. And, the primary people in the book revolved around the family line of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

GENESIS IS TO BE READ DESCRIPTIVELY

In the Bible some texts are prescriptive, meaning they tell us what we should do. Examples would include the biblical command that Christians love one another, children obey their parents, and not steal. The Bible also includes descriptive texts that tell us what someone did and leaves it up to the reader to determine if they should do the same. Examples would include Lot's daughters getting him drunk to have sex with him, Dinah's brothers slaughtering a town of men for the rape of their sister, and Judas hanging himself. Therefore, as you read Genesis it is important to determine what Moses the author of Genesis is trying to teach you through the narratives he writes. And, just because Cain killed Abel, Noah and Lot get drunk, and Abraham tries to murder his son does not mean that you should too simply because it's in the Bible. Rather, we must be careful to determine which stories are prescriptive examples for us to follow such as trusting God by faith like Abraham, and which descriptive stories are frightening examples for us not to follow such as Adam and Eve trusting Satan over God.

GENESIS IS TO BE READ PATRIARCHALLY

In Genesis, man was made first and given dominion over all Creation and woman was made to help him (2:15-18; cf. I Corinthians 11:8-9; I Timothy 2:13). Also, God calls the human race "mankind" because it began with the creation of a man as the head of the human race (Genesis 5:1-2). Additionally, throughout Genesis it is the men who are dominant, though the women are prominent. Particularly, the numerous genealogies throughout Genesis are traced through the male line in recognition of the headship of men over their families. Additionally, the genealogies are generally traced through the firstborn son though sometimes another son is chosen either because the oldest son sinned grievously (e.g. Cain killed Abel and so Seth passed him over in Genesis 4:1-25), or because of God's sovereign choice (e.g. though Esau was born first God chose Jacob in Genesis 25:23). Simply, in Genesis men matter.

GENESIS IS TO BE READ MEDITATIVELY

According to Deuteronomy 6:1-9 the wisdom of the Pentateuch in general, including Genesis in particular, is not just to be written on tablets of stone or scrolls of paper but also on the heart of those people who love God. And, the writing of God's Word upon our hearts is accomplished as we meditate on Scripture throughout our day thereby allowing the Holy Spirit to impress His wisdom upon us. Therefore, it is important for you to not only read Genesis repeatedly, but also memorize those verses that stand out to you and take time throughout your day to contemplate the themes, images, and verses that God burdens you to better understand. And, the memory verses suggested for you in this booklet will also be helpful to you.







GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What did you learn about the earth's origin growing up? Has your view of creation changed as you've grown older?

What astounds you about God's creation? What does the majesty of the creation tell us about the Creator?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The word "Genesis" means "in the beginning." Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, is a book of beginnings. It has been said that every major doctrine has its seed or beginning in Genesis. For example, the material universe, the human race, sin, the promise of the Messiah, languages, and the Hebrew nation all have their beginnings in the book of Genesis.

It is generally agreed that Moses authored the book of Genesis about 1500 years before Christ. Genesis covers a time period of nearly 2500 years, from the Creation to the journey of Israel into Egypt.

SUMMARY

This is the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, God's Word. The chapter tells us how God created our world by speaking everything into being in the span of six days, and describes what God created during each day. There was nothing in the beginning, other than God over "waters." Out of nothing, God creates simply by speaking:

FROM NOTHING

- DAY 1 God created light and darkness. He called them day and night.
- DAY 2 God created an expanse in between waters. God called the place in between the waters sky (or heavens).
- DAY 3 God gathered the water and created land. God called them seas and earth. He saw this was good. He made vegetation and plants come out of the earth. He saw this was good.
- DAY 4 God made lights in sky. He made the sun and moon and stars (for direction, seasons, time, lights all things that give us a sense of direction and place). He saw this was good.
- DAY 5 God made water creatures to fill the seas and sky creatures to fill the skies. God saw that it was good.
- DAY 6 God made land animals and humans to fill the earth. God saw that it was good. God gave plants as food to people and animals. God looked over everything He had up until this point and said it was very good.
- DAY 7 God rested. This made the day holy (set apart) Humans were given dominion over all other living creatures.

INSIGHTS

EACH CREATION DAY1 - day and night are created DAY IS PAIRED DAY4 - sun, moon and mtars created to fill the day and night WITH ANOTHER

> DAY 2 - water and sky are created Day 5 - water and sky Creatures created to fill the water and sky

DAY 3 - seas and earth are created DAY 6 - animals, humans and plants are created to fill the seas and earth

DAY 7 - rest. set spart as holy

WATER EXISTING Water in the ancient near eastern world represented chaos, and so mentioning the water before creation began may have been a way to illustrate God bringing about order to that which was chaotic. Revelation 21:1 may also support this, as in the "new heaven and the new earth" there is no "sea."

GOD AS TRINTY God exists in relationship with himself (which we now know from the New Testament as Trinitarian God) In Genesis 1:26, we see the Trinity referenced: God refers to himself in the plural "our," not in the singular.

HUMANITY WORKING L TOGETHER TO REFLECT GOD'S IMAGE

Let "them" – this is male and female together. There are two different types of humanity, each in their own roles, working together in relationship to best reflect God, who also works in relationship.

GENESIS ONE People at first glance might think the two chapters are two different VS accounts, but they aren't. One is just a more detailed glimpse of a specific part. Genesis 1:27 is a quick summary of the upcoming chapter. Imagine setting a magnifying glass over Genesis 1:27 - what would be revealed to you is what we see in Chapter 2. Genesis 2 is simply a much more detailed description of Genesis 1:27.

- NO SACRIFICE_YET In Genesis 1:29-30 plants are given both to people and to animals for food. People aren't to eat (or be clothed) by animals...yet.
 - SEVEN DAYS The number 7 in the original Hebrew is symbolic of perfection and completion. The days of creation set the stage for the days of the week, and serve as an example of work six days, stop on the seventh.



In the Hebrew, 7 is shevah. It is from the root savah, to be full or satisfied, have enough of. Hence the meaning of the word "seven" is dominated by this root, for on the seventh day God rested from the work of Creation. It was full and complete, and good and perfect. Nothing could be added to it or taken from it without marring it. Hence the word Shavath, to cease, desist, rest, and Shabbath, Sabbath, or day of rest.

It is 7, therefore, that stamps with perfection and completeness that in connection with which it is used. Of time, it tells of the Sabbath, and marks off the week of seven days, which, artificial as it may seem to be, is universal and immemorial in its observance amongst all nations and in all times. It tells of that eternal Sabbath-keeping which remains for the people of God in all its everlasting perfection.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Psalm 19:1-4
- John 1:1-18
- Acts 17:24-27
- Romans 1:20
- Hebrews 1
- Colossians 1:15-17

GOING DEEPER

What does it mean to be "made in God's image" and to "rule" over the creatures of the earth (see Gen. 1:26)? How do these two truths affect how we are to live our daily lives?

What are the 5 commands God gave mankind in Gen 1:28? How do these impact how we as humans live life today? How do they impact your own life specifically?

Consider God's purpose in creation. In Acts 17:24-27 we see that the universe was created for God to be made known. How does the Gospel allow you to fulfill your created purpose, to make God famous in the world around you? Pray for those in your life who don't yet know Jesus, "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward Him and find Him."

Read John 1:1-3, and consider Jesus' role in God's plan for creation. How does Genesis 1 help you appreciate the nature and work of Christ? Take a moment with your group to thank God for His creation and for the Gospel. Give God glory for His power, His purpose and His perfect plan as seen in His creation.

NOTES



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What are some legacies and traditions that impact your life today?

What are some common ideas that our society has about the purpose of human life?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Genesis 2 outlines in more detail the creation of man and women that was detailed in chapter 1. The garden described in this chapter was likely located in the area of the present day Persian Gulf.¹

SUMMARY

Genesis 2 shows us that the creative work of God was not only vast and far-reaching, but it was also intimate and impacted the details of humanity. The text tells us of the creation of A man and woman who lived for a time in a paradise that would later be lost. God not only made Adam, but He also provided meaningful work and the fitting companionship of his wife. Being endowed with such blessing and being made in God's image, Adam had the privilege and responsibility of carrying out God's agenda.

God not only formed Adam, but also breathed life into him. The Hebrew word for formed (yāṣar, Gen. 2:7) describes purposeful artistry. The Bible Knowledge commentary explains, "like a potter shaping an earthen vessel from clay, so God formed man by divine plan". Breathing life into Adam made him not only alive,

¹ Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.) The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, p. 31). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

but alive with a soul. This means that Adam was a spiritual being (and so is everyone else), meant to serve and fellowship with God (and others).

With the command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we see how God made people with moral capacities and moral responsibility; something that will play out in the coming chapter. Finally, the making of woman and the institution of marriage provides wonderful insights for the design and purpose of marriage and human relationships.

INSIGHTS

via Strassner in OPENING UP GENESIS

- DIGNITY If man is created "in the image of God," no one has the right to degrade or destroy human life—neither one's own life, nor that of another. This principle must be applied in the areas of social justice, race relations, sexual ethics, abortion, euthanasia, and etc..
- DOMINION We are to "rule over" the other created beings (Gen. 1:26) and "subdue" the earth (Gen. 1:28). Man has been given dominion over both plants (Gen. 2:15) and animals (Gen. 2:20). Human beings have the God-given authority to use the earth's resources but are also accountable to do those things responsibly.
- DISTINCTION "Male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Genesis 2 highlights this difference by giving the genders separate names (Gen. 2:23), showing how they were created separately (Gen. 2:7, 2:22), and calling one a "helper" for the other (Gen. 2:18). Man and woman were created equal "in the image of God," but their roles are clearly distinct.
 - DUTY The relationship between God and man was not one between equals. Nor was it one of autonomy. Man is dependent upon God for the blessings of life and sustenance; and man is accountable to God in the areas of service and obedience! Further, God's command concerning the tree (Gen. 2:16–17) makes it clear that man was and is capable of receiving and understanding moral instruction—and is responsible for his obedience. If we disobey God, we "will surely die" (Gen. 2:17).²

² Strassner, K. (2009). Opening up Genesis. Opening Up Commentary (pp. 24–26). Leominster: Day One Publications.

THE FIRST ADAM

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Ecclesiastes 12:7
- Colossians 1:16-17
- Romans 5:12
- Psalm 19:1-4
- Ephesians 5:28
- First Corinthians 15:42-49

GOING DEEPER

How was Adam the representative of all of mankind? What privileges did he have? What responsibilities did he have? What was his role in establishing a legacy for the rest of humanity? (see Romans 5:12)

What insights about marriage can be gleaned from Gen 2:18-25? What does this particular passage tell us about God's design, care, and purpose for marriage? How does your life match up with what's described in this passage?

Genesis 2 concludes with, "the man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed". While the first married couple was literally naked, there are deep spiritual implications within this passage as well. How did an absence of sin allow for freedom, joy, and full transparency? How has sin in your life prevented these wonderful gifts? How does the Gospel enable us to move past the sins from our past and live in freedom going forward? Read First Corinthians 15:42-49 and reflect on the beautiful reality that Jesus is "the last adam." Take a minute to pray together, thanking God for Jesus' sacrificial death for your sins.

NOTES

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THE FALL



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Where do you see brokenness and sin in the world around you? What impact does this have on your life?

Christians sometimes talk about being "saved." What exactly are we being "saved" from when we put our faith in Christ? Do you believe you need to be "saved"?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Adam and Eve were beings created in God's image and placed into his good and perfect world. This third chapter of Genesis (following the creation and mankind origins) is another story of origin – the origin of sin and the broken world that every man and woman has since been born into.

SUMMARY

Satan, in the form of a serpent, approached the woman (soon to be named Eve) and began a conversation with her. Through their conversation he deceived her into thinking she should eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. She and Adam both ate fruit from the tree and became aware that they were naked. God came into the garden a little bit later, and they covered themselves with leaves and hid from Him. When God asked if they ate from the tree, Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. God then cursed the serpent, the woman, and Adam, each in different ways. Adam named Eve. God made Adam and Eve clothing out of animal skins. In order to keep Adam and Eve from eating from the Tree of

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SATAN'S PLAN¹ Doubt - Makes you question God's Word and his goodness

Discouragement - Make you look at your problems rather than at God

Diversion - Makes the wrong things seem attractive so that you will want them more than the right things

Defeat - Makes you feel like a failure so that you don't even try

Delay - Makes you put off doing something so that it never gets done

"THETR FYES There are spiritual realities that we are still shielded and protected from. There is a spiritual realm that we cannot see...for our own good. WERE OPENED" But just because our eyes are not always open to this doesn't mean it's not there. If we were to be aware of all that was part of the spiritual realm, it would probably overwhelm us, and the evil part of it would paralyze us. But, God "opens our eyes" to the good parts as well, revealing his spiritual truths and Word more and more as we walk with Him and are taught by the Holy Spirit (First Corinthians 2:9-3:2; John 16: 12-15) Many of the spiritual realities that we are not fully aware of - both evil and good - we will never fully grasp until we are united with God in heaven.

THE CURSES The serpent was cursed to slide on its belly and to have enmity with people. The woman was given pain in childbearing and frustration with her husband. The man was given hard working conditions. Each individual was held accountable for his or her sin in a different way, but only the snake and the ground were actually "cursed."

(JESUS)

FORFSHADOWING When Adam and Eve sinned, they realized something was wrong and THE FIRST SACRIFICE tried to hide themselves with fig leaves. God, in foreshadowing the eventual sacrifice that would be needed to cover all of our sins, made the first blood sacrifice here when he sacrificed an animal in order to sufficiently cover them. Human effort and leaves were not enough. To "cover themselves" adequately they needed God to do it, and with a

blood sacrifice. This introduces the fact that in order to cover over sin, self-effort will get us nowhere, and a God-given blood sacrifice is needed.

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- MERCY IN When Adam and Eve are banished from the garden, this is a
- PUNISHMENT consequence of their actions that is in a sense a punishment, but also a big act of mercy. God was sparing them from living in a sinful state forever. Death was now the only means to a life united with God.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 2:16-17
- lsaiah 14
- Ezekiel 28
- First Corinthians 15:20-22
- First Timothy 2:11-15
- Revelation 12

GOING DEEPER

How does the relationship between God and Man change as a result of sin? Consider the following series of events in Genesis 3:1-7:

- Satan APPROACHES, and the woman ENGAGES (doesn't walk away)
- Satan asks a question that QUESTIONS GOD'S WORD
- The woman ADDS TO GOD'S WORD ("you must not touch it…")
- Satan REFUTES GOD'S WORD WITH A TWISTED LIE
- The woman TRUSTS ANOTHER BESIDES GOD, and follows her own HEART/ MIND/LOGIC to make a choice
- The woman BRINGS ANOTHER PERSON INTO HER SIN
- She, along with her husband, tries to COVER UP HER SIN and hide from God.

Do you see this same pattern happening with us today? How would you have responded if you found yourself in Eve's situation?

In Genesis 3:7, Adam and Eve lose their innocence and realize how naked and unworthy they are. Their instant reaction is to make coverings out of leaves for themselves and try to hide. How does this example compare to the self-effort or hiding we as Christians often engage in after we've sinned? Why do you think we rely on our own self-efforts instead of running directly to God? How does the Gospel free us from our need to "effort" our way to God?

Read Romans 5:12-21, and discuss what it means in relation to Genesis 3 as a whole (and specifically, Genesis 3:15). How does Genesis 3 point us to the Gospel?

Confession is an act of humility that will help prevent us from trying to work for our own salvation. Take a few minutes to pray together, confessing your tendency to follow after your sin nature, and remembering that Jesus has already done the work needed to save us.

NOTES



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What connection is there between what a person believes about God and how they treat other people? Is the average person in our society truly concerned with the welfare of others? What are some of the ways people dodge responsibility to love others and rationalize being selfish?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Genesis 4 picks up after "the Fall" in chapter 3. Humanity had tragically disobeyed God and their sin resulted in isolation from God and chaos greater than they could have imagined. Genesis 4 speaks to the advance and spread of sin, first through interpersonal relationships and then into the societies that began to form in the ancient world.

SUMMARY

The consequences of sin became clear in the second generation when Cain killed his own brother Abel. Just as his parents had been expelled from God's presence in the garden, Cain was expelled from human society to undertake a life of wandering. Yet, despite the curse and consequences, there was a trace of God's grace, the "mark on Cain," symbolizing God's protection.¹ Not only did Cain kill someone more godly than himself, he denied responsibility and would not accept the consequences of his actions. In the New Testament, Jude (Jude 11) explains the "way of Cain" as a lack of faith shown in envy of God's dealings with the righteous, particularly in murder, denying responsibility, and in rejecting God's punishment.² Later in Genesis 4, the emerging populations were not simply developing culturally (see Gen 4:20-22) and expanding geographically (Gen 4:16-17), but were also living in the reality and consequences of sin; evil was surely advancing. Lamech killed a young man who wounded him and boasted about the murder (the word in Gen 4:23 is hāraā, "to slay, to slaughter").³ Lamech also demanded greater vengeance that might come his way than that afforded to Cain (Gen 4:24). Here we are left with a contrast between a godless society defying God with the relatively righteous line from Seth who began to call on (or "proclaim") the name of the Lord (Yahweh).⁴

INSIGHTS

via THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY

BIBLICAL THEMES Sacrifices should be offered & should be done by faith.

Israelites had responsibilities to their brothers—they were each others' keepers and must not kill one another.

Homicidal blood polluted the land, crying out for vengeance.

Blood revenge was averted by God's gracious protection.

Sin/guilt is punishable.

Life without God is dangerous and miserable.

Sometimes the elder brother was rejected in favor of the younger.

CONTRASTS The two brothers in Genesis 4 were quite different types of people. Cain was unrighteous and worked the soil. Abel, since he kept sheep (Gen. 4:2), seemed to be striving after man's original purpose by practicing dominion over life (Gen 1:28). In terms of worship, Abel went out of his way to please God (see Hebrews 11:6), whereas Cain was simply doing the bare minimum of his duty. These two types of people are still present today.

² J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol.

^{1,} p. 30). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

- UNEXPECTED GRACE Though Cain murdered his brother and complained the punishment of wandering and having poor harvests (Gen. 4:10–12) was too harsh, God's gracious character and faithfulness was still evident. God graciously protected him by some (unknown) mark that would be a deterrent to anyone who would kill him in return.
 - INHERITANCE Cain's story presents a picture of us all. Because we have inherited Adam's sin nature; "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners (Romans 5:19)." And, in inheriting Adam's sin nature, we have inherited the death that comes with it. For humanity to have any hope, the established bondage to sin and death would have to be broken.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Jude 11
- Matthew 22:39
- First John 3:12, 3:15
- Romans 5:12, 5:19
- Matthew 18:8-9

GOING DEEPER

In Genesis 4:8-9, Cain's uncaring words expressed his unwillingness to accept responsibility for the welfare of his own brother. Consider what your spouse, friends, neighbors and co-workers would say about how much you care for their welfare. Is this sort of indifference to others common in your life?

The legacy of sin has a terrible trajectory; after Cain killed his brother (Gen. 4:8), we later read that Lamech killed as well (Gen. 4:23). Yet, his declaration in verse 24 indicates that his vengeance was exponentially severe. What sin(s) have you observed in your life, your family, and your society that seem to get exponentially worse over time?

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As you read Genesis 4:8-9, note how Cain lies to attempt to cover his tracks. What examples in popular culture or even in your own life can you think of where one sin led to more sin in an attempt to cover it up? Since sin cannot be ignored, what is needed to truly deal with the reality of sin?

How radically different is Jesus in contrast with the words and deeds of Cain? Jesus said the second greatest commandment was to, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). True love is willing to pay any price, how did Jesus ultimately address the welfare of others?

The Gospel says we cannot cover our own sin, but rather that we need Jesus to cover our sin for us. Take a minute to pray together, thanking God for sending Jesus to cover our sin with His sacrificial death on the cross.

NOTES

THE FLOOD



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

How did you learn about Noah and the Flood account growing up? What specifically do you remember about the story?

Noah was asked to build a ginormous boat before he saw evidence of the coming flood. Have you ever been challenged to exercise faith in this way, to follow God's commands without having full understanding of why?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The Bible does not state specifically where Noah lived. We do know from the Text that the Ark landed on Mt. Ararat, which is located north of modern day Iran.

SUMMARY

Beginning in Genesis 5 the Biblical story transitions from the Creation account to the Flood account. Chapter 5 details the genealogy of descendants from Adam to Noah, covering a period of about 1000 years. During the time of Noah the wickedness of man causes God to "blot out man" with a worldwide flood that lasted about 200 days. Because God found favor with Noah, He gave Noah and his family specific building instructions for a large ark that enabled them to survive the flood. Along with Noah and his family the Ark carried two of every "sort" or "kind" of animal, along with enough food to sustain life on the Ark during the flood.

INSIGHTS

- One notable member of the genealogy from Adam to Noah is Enoch. The Text says that Enoch "walked with God," and that Enoch did not die like a typical person but rather was "taken" by God and "did not see death." (See Heb 11:5)
- 2. Even in these early accounts the sin nature of man is evident. In Genesis 6:5 it says "every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It was the wickedness of man that evoked the arrival of wrath of God in the form of a worldwide deluge.
- 3. The Bible calls Noah a "righteous man," and often times it is assumed that Noah's righteousness comes from his own good works. In actuality, in Genesis 6:8 we see that Noah first "found favor in the eyes of the Lord," and then he is described as a "righteous man." Noah didn't find favor with God because he was righteous, he was righteous because he found favor with God. In this way the story of Noah is a foreshadowing of the Gospel. In fact, the word "favor" is actually the Hebrew word "hen," which can also be translated as "grace." This is the first mention of word "grace" in the Bible, serving as an introduction a foundational Gospel concept that is a consistent theme in the Scripture going forward. Noah was not originally a "righteous man," but became one by God's grace. (see also Ephesians 2:1-10)
- 4. In Genesis 7:19 the Bible says "the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole earth were covered." A flood of this magnitude could only occur by the miraculous hand of God. It speaks to the immense power of God, and to how seriously God takes sin, that God found it necessary to bring a worldwide flood. Everything was destroyed, and every living thing perished, except for Noah's family and the animals on the Ark.

THE FLOOD

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Matthew 24:36-44
- Luke 17:26-27
- Romans 1:18-32
- Ephesians 2:1-10
- Hebrews 11:5-7
- Second Peter 2:1-5
- Second Peter 3:1-15

GOING DEEPER

Are there parts of Genesis 6:1 – Genesis 8:22 that are difficult for you to believe? How do you approach sections of Scripture that detail events that could only take place miraculously? Discuss any questions or doubts you might be facing in reading and studying this story.

The fact that God detests sin is evident in this story, yet in Genesis 8:21 God says "I will never again curse the ground because of man." If not through destruction, how then does God reveal His wrath today? Read Romans 1:18-32, and discuss God's response to sin as described by Paul.

In Genesis 8:20 the Bible says, "then Noah built an altar to the Lord...and he sacrificed burnt offerings on it." What sacrificial offerings does God require us to make to Him today? On the one hand, the Gospel says Jesus became our sacrifice "once for all." (see Hebrews 10:10) At the same time, our grateful response to the Gospel is to offer our lives in sacrificial service to God. (see Romans 12:1-2 and Hebrews 13:15-16)

In Second Peter 3:1-15 we see that whereas previously God deluged the earth with water, now God is patiently waiting for Christians to share the good news of Jesus with more people so they will repent before He returns. Spend some time praying together for those people in your life who do not yet know God, that they would hear and believe the Gospel and be saved.

NOTES



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Noah and his family had just been given a brand new beginning. In what area of your life have you experienced or do you need to experience a new beginning?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The "good" earth that God had created in the beginning had spiraled down to the point where God couldn't let it go on like it was. In Genesis 6, God saw "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." So, God had just sent a flood over the entire earth to destroy everything, save Noah, his family, and two of every kind of animal, who all remained safe in an ark. Here, we see yet another origin account, or "genesis" story. With Noah's family and the animals, God was creating another beginning on earth.

SUMMARY

Chapter 9 begins with God blessing Noah and his sons, giving them a command "to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" that echoes the one he gave Adam and Eve in Genesis 1. God gave them animals – no longer just plants – as food to eat. He also gave the command not to kill another person, because people are made in His image. God made a covenant with Noah and all living creatures that he would never destroy the world with a flood again. He gave them a sign of this covenant in the form of a rainbow. Noah and his sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth – left the ark. Noah, who had started farming, got drunk on wine from his vineyard. He passed out naked in his tent, and Ham saw him and told his brothers. Shem and Japeth took a coat and brought it in to cover their father, walking in backward so they didn't see him. When Noah woke up, he cursed Canaan (Ham's son) and blessed his two other sons who had respectfully covered him. Noah lived 350 years following the flood, and died at the age of 950.

INSIGHTS

NEW CREATION: Chapter 9 begins with God blessing Noah and his sons, giving them a GOD VS. NOAH command that echoes the one he gives Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and signifying another new beginning on earth.

ANIMALS VS Animals are given as food here. It is permissible to kill them for food, HUMANS maybe because a lot of the vegetation had been destroyed so there wasn't enough to sustain people. It's possible that this is why the "fear and dread" would be on them now – whether that was something immediately given to them as a means of protection by God, or if it was just a natural eventual result of being killed by people.

God immediately follows up with the clarification that people are not to kill other people though, and explains why – because "God made man in his own image."

BAPTISM AND Water as part of this covenant is significant in the sense that it symbolizes cleansing. First creation fell, then it was cleansed by water, and even though people will still sin, God promised it wouldn't be destroyed ever again. This is how it works with us on a spiritual level as well: we initially fall, we are cleansed – which is symbolized by water in baptism – and then we are saved. Once we're saved, we can't lose our salvation; God's promise to save us stands.

Water in the form of a flood destroyed all the sin and cleansed the world – pointing towards God's future plan to destroy the sin and cleanse us. The water of baptism is symbolic of the point where God destroys the sin of my past life and I'm cleansed by the blood of Jesus (baptism is not in itself the thing that saves, but is a representation of the thing that saves)...and then, just like Noah, I'm commanded to be "fruitful and multiply and increase" – spiritually speaking. (See First Peter 3:18-22)

RAINBOW God sets his bow in the clouds as a sign of his covenant to never wage war on the earth in the form of flood ever again. A popular children's Bible says it this way:

The first thing Noah did was to thank God for rescuing them, just as he had promised. And the first thing God did was make another promise. "I won't ever destroy the world again." And like a warrior who puts away his bow and arrow at the end of a great battle, God said, "See, I have hung up my bow in the clouds." And there, in the clouds – just where the storm meets the sun – was a beautiful bow made of light. It was a new beginning in God's world.

From The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd–Jones, Zondervan $2009\,$

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 1:28-30
- Genesis 6:5-8;
- Genesis 6:11-13
- First Peter 3:18-22

GOING DEEPER

What is revealed about God in the fact that He has promised to never again wipe humanity off the face of the earth despite the fact that we continue to sin? How does this make you feel about God?

Genesis 9 shows that God uses Noah even though he continues to struggle with sin. Are you tempted to exclude the possibility of God using you because you still struggle with sin or have sinned in the past? Noah has just seen God wipe man from the face of the earth because of their sin, yet he sins blatantly and quickly after this event. Why do you think we (like Noah) tend to choose to sin to easily even when we know God's distaste for sin?

God made a promise to creation as a whole that he would not destroy it in this fashion again, even though he knew that Man would go right on sinning. In this way, God's covenant had nothing to do with the performance of Man, but rather the grace of God. Spend some time thanking God for the Gospel, that through Jesus He has set us free from certain death and also from our need to perform in order to be saved.

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THE TOWER



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

How would our world be different without the language barrier that has existed since this time? Are there advantages to the many languages spoken in our world today, or would you prefer a world where everyone spoke the same language?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The Tower of Babel was likely located in what is now modern day Syria.

In Genesis 11:7 when the text says, "Come, let us go down and confuse their language..." it's a reference to God's existence in the form of the Trinity...one God in three persons.

SUMMARY

Genesis 10 starts with a lengthy list of names called a genealogy. While these lists can seem tedious to read, they often introduce key people that God wants us to know about as we read His Word. This specific list of names is referred to as "The Table of Nations," and it shows the reader how the descendants of Noah will be divided and scattered after the tower of Babel in Chapter 11.

Genesis 11:1-9 then recounts the history of the people of the earth losing both a common language and a common history. This is the final time in the Old Testament Narrative that we see all people of the earth so narrowly linked with respect to history and location.

After the great flood God instructed Noah and his family to "be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it." (Gen. 9:7) This instruction implied a spreading of peoples across the land as they had children and repopulated the land. In contrast we see in chapter 11 that the people decided to stay in one place and eventually start the construction of the city and tower of Babel. It is important to note that the sin of these people was not in the building of a tower, but instead in ignoring the command of God to "fill the earth." By staying put in an attempt to build a great city, the people disobeyed the clear instruction God gave them. As a result, the Tower of Babel became a symbol of their pride, believing they could reach heaven through their own efforts.

In punishment for this transgression and prevention of greater sin, God confuses the languages of the people and spreads them about the earth.

INSIGHTS

- PRIDE The sin that brings this destruction of common language is pride. While the people of Earth are only a few generationS out from the great flood, they think that their desires and will trump that of God, that they can be a great nation, and build a tower that will reach to Heaven.
- REBELLION The choice of the people to remain together, and build this great city was in direct opposition to what God had instructed. God shows that the result of rebellion is punishment, in the moment and finally in death. In Genesis, since the fall in the first chapters, man has constantly (and will constantly) rebel against God's will.
- GOD'S POWER OVER The destruction of Babylon sets up a precedent for God's ability to THE NATIONS the reader that while on earth the plans of great Super Powers seem unstoppable, that God is infinitely more powerful and able to destroy or redirect wayward nations as he sees fit.

GOD'S GRACE AND COVENANT COMMITMENT While God did punish the people of earth for their sin, He did not destroy them as they deserve for their rebellion, instead he shows grace. The reader knows how near the flood was to this event, and remembers that God has promised that he would not clear the Earth in this fashion again, a promise which he keeps.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Zephaniah 3:9-11
 - John 17
 - Acts 2:1-10

GOING DEEPER

This passage teaches that our ability to easily communicate and relate across the entire human race was destroyed in this moment. How are you the consequences of this event still evident in the world today? In your own life?

Another implication of the Tower of Babel is disunity in the human race. Where in your community/neighborhood do you see disunity? Do you often view this as "just the way it is" or do you see it as the direct result of sin?

Pride and rebellion are key themes in this passage. What areas in your life do you find yourself drawn to rebel against Gods will? Where do you feel your heart pulling you towards pride, thinking that "my way is better," or "I deserve more?"

The events of the Tower of Babel bring disunity to the people of earth, while the Gospel reinstates unity among all believers. Take a minute to thank God for unity in Christ, and to pray together for unity within your life group, family, church, and neighborhood.

NOTES

THE TOWER

NOTES







GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Who is your oldest living relative? How much of this person's story can you share?

What are the biggest promises you've made in your life? How about promises that have been made to you? How have those promises been fulfilled, or been left unfulfilled?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Abram, whose name God later changed to Abraham, was born in a famous city of the ancient world, Ur, which was in present-day southern Iraq. In Abram's day, 4,100 years ago, Ur was center of a rich Sumerian culture; a city lying along the Euphrates that boasted monumental architecture, vast wealth, comfortable homes, music, and art.¹

SUMMARY

In Genesis 11 we find the earliest shoots in the Jewish family tree. And since "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22), Genesis 12 offers us the initial blueprints of God's great plan of salvation. Though Abram "worshiped other gods" (Joshua 24:2) in Ur, when God spoke to him he left his civilization, traveled to Canaan, and began to follow the one true God. When we read about God's calling of Abram, we are actually tracing a story line that takes us all the way to Jesus.

God made significant and unconditional promises including descendants, blessings, and land to Abram, telling him what "I will" do (Gen. 12:1-3). No sooner were God's promises given than their fulfillment was "threatened." Faced with famine, Abraham deserted the "promised land." He showed his own lack of faith by pretending his wife was his sister and placing her, though she was the person promised to produce descendants, in a potentially compromising position as a member of Pharaoh's harem.

By chapter 13 Abraham already had spent time in Egypt (Gen. 12:10–20) and was, by God's grace, coming out of Egypt with riches and honor. Yet, in the midst of occupying Canaan, Abraham divided the land between himself and his nephew Lot after disputes arose about land use. Nonetheless, the territories through which he had previously traveled as a nomad now became his in permanent habitation, just as God had promised (Gen. 13:4–8).²

INSIGHTS

GOD'S PROMISES via THE TEACHER'S COMMENTARY

- "I WILL" These words introduce the covenant promise in Genesis 12:2–3. The details are unclear at this point. But the general shape of God's purpose is taking form.
- "I WILL MAKE YOU From Abraham, Arabs and Jews alike trace their origin. More than one A GREAT NATION" nation now calls Abraham "father."
- "I WILL BLESS YOU Reverence from millions in three great monotheistic faiths (Christian-AND MAKE YOUR ity, Judaism, and Islam) has more than fulfilled this promise. NAME GREAT"
- "I WILL BLESS THOSE The rise and fall of many empires hinged on whether they supported WHO BLESS YOU, AND CURSE THOSE WHO CURSE YOU"

"IN YOU WILL ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED"

God's choice of Abraham and his children was not designed to exclude others. From the very beginning God's choice of Israel was intended for the benefit of mankind. And on the return of Christ, the King, the fullness of blessing will be extended to all.

"TO YOUR DESCENDANTS I WILL GIVE THIS LAND"

"TO YOUR The purposes of God, and the future of Israel, are focused on a partic-S I WILL ular place: a land, Palestine, where in our own day we've seen the planting once again of a Jewish state.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:27

- Romans 4:12
- Acts 7:2
- Romans 8:28
- Matthew 18:8-9

GOING DEEPER

God called Abraham to himself...it was by God's grace that Abraham became part of God's family. Have each person in the group briefly share their story of how God brought them into His family. Consider Abram's episodes of great faith in God (Gen. 12:1-4), as well as his profound lapses in faith (Gen. 12:10-13). What have been some high and low points of your own journey of faith?

Historically speaking, where did the Christian faith come from? How does the storyline of the Old Testament connect to Jesus and the Gospel?

Promises are only as good as those who make them. What promises of God do you struggle to believe? How are you doing with keeping promises in the most important relationships of your life?

Chapter 12 verse 4 plainly says, "So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him". How about you? Are you simply obeying the Lord? Or are there clear commandments of God that you have left undone?

All disobedience boils down to one of the two. Either we do not care what God says (he is not Lord); or we do not believe what God says (we do not trust him).³ Take some time as a group to thank God that through the Gospel we are able to believe in Jesus as Lord and entrust our lives to Him. Then pray for faith to trust in God's promises and obey His clear commands.



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What are your initial thoughts about these events - the wars, Abram's rescue of Lot, and of God's promises to Abram concerning a son and a land?

Has the reality of war ever felt real in your life? What effect did this have on you?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

KINGS VS. CHEDORLAOMER

In Chapter 14, five kings "rebelled," which meant they stopped paying their money and goods to a ruler named Chedorlaomer, who'd they been paying for twelve years. A year after this, Chedorlaomer and his allies went around conquering different cities, and when they came up into the rebelling kings' region, the kings went out to fight him. Chedorlaomer won and plundered their cities, one of which was Sodom. This resulted in Abraham's nephew Lot, who was living in Sodom, being taken captive.

HEIRS

In this time and culture, a man without children of his own would commonly adopt a male servant to be his heir and guardian of his estate. This is what Abraham is probably planning to do and what he mentions to God in Genesis 15:3.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant. God made promises to Abraham that required nothing of Abraham. Genesis 15:18-21 describes a part of the Abrahamic Covenant, specifically dealing with the dimensions of the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants. (from GOTQUESTIONS.ORG)

In the time of Abraham covenants were made by two parties walking down an aisle lined with pieces of animals on each side of the aisle, symbolizing "may this be done to me if I don't keep my word." The smoking furnace and flaming torch that walked through the animals in this covenant were representing God, showing that God took the full responsibility of fulfilling the covenant onto himself. He stopped Abraham from participating by bringing a deep sleep over him.

SUMMARY

CHAPTER 14

Five kings who had "rebelled" the previous year against their former ruler, Chedorlaomer, came out to fight him and his allies. Chedorlaomer conquered the five kings, including the kings of the city of Sodom and Gomorrah. The conquering kings took Abram's nephew Lot as a captive of war, since he was living in Sodom at the time. Abram heard about Lot's captivity and took 318 trained men from his tribe to chase after Lot. Abram's men attacked the other army at night and rescued Lot, his family, and the other captives of Sodom.

On Abram's way back, the King of Sodom came out to meet Abram. At the same time, the king of Salem (Melchizedek), who was also high priest, came out to Abram with bread and wine. Melchizedek blessed Abram; Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything. The king of Sodom told Abram he only wants his people back and that Abram should keep the wealth, but Abram won't accept anything from the king of Sodom. This way, he said, the king of Sodom would never be able to claim that Abram's success in the future was a result of these possessions.

FATHER ABRAHAM

1

CHAPTER 15

God came to Abram in a vision, assuring him that he would protect and reward him. Abram didn't understand how God could "reward him" since he didn't have a child of his own, but God told him that that he would have his own son, along with many descendents - as many as the stars in the sky. Abram believed God, and God counted this as righteousness. God then told him that the land he was in would belong to Abram one day. Abram asked how he was supposed to believe this, and God told him to get some animals and birds and bring them to him. Abram cut the animals in half in preparation for a covenant ceremony. Birds of prey tried to get to the dead animals but Abram chased them away. Abram fell into a deep sleep and had a vision from God that told him his descendents would be slaves in a foreign land, but that 400 years later they'd come out of it and come back to his own promised land. A firepot with a lit torch passed between the pieces of animals, securing God's covenant with Abram concerning the Promised Land.

Because God alone passed between the animals, His covenant with Abraham was unconditional. Nothing Abraham or his descendants could do would nullify this agreement; it stands forever. As the author of Hebrews wrote, "when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself ... "Hebrews 6:13

A TYPE OF CHRTST

MFI (HT7FDFK) The name Melchizedek literally means "King of Righteousness" and King of Salem literally means "King of Peace," so Melchizedek is both King of Righteousness" and King of Peace.

> Salem is possibly the eventual Jerusalem, which makes it more interesting that this "King of Righteousness" and "King of Peace," who is also a "high priest of the God Most High" is coming out of Jerusalem - foreshadowing Jesus and what is to come.

> Melchizedek comes out with bread and wine - a common form of refreshment then - but also a very familiar pairing to those of us

familiar with the New Testament communion ceremony and all it represents in Christ.

The "order of Melchizedek" talked about in the Psalms and in the New Testament is higher than the line of Aaron, or the Levites order of high priests. Jesus is a priest in "the order of Melchizedek," meaning his priesthood is forever, different from, and superior to anything from the Levitical Priesthood. (Hebrews 7:1-10)

BELIEF =This is the first time we see faith in God's promise, and we see thisRIGHTEOUSNESSfaith credited as righteousness by God. Righteousness has ALWAYS
been through faith, in both the Old and New Testament.

Before Christ, it was by faith in God's promises and the promised future Messiah. People in the Old Testament offered sacrifices as an expression of their faith – it was not the sacrificial act itself that saved them, but the faith involved as they made the sacrifice. These sacrifices were in anticipation of the final sacrifice that would someday come. Today, righteousness is by faith in God's promises and Jesus the Messiah. In our time, we don't look ahead in anticipation, but rather we look back with thankfulness on the sacrifice of Jesus.

So both then and now, it has always been based on faith. Abraham looked ahead and hoped for these promises. We look back and remember these promises. They all hinge on the same point though – that time in history where God fulfilled his promise to us: the Cross of Jesus Christ.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Psalm 110:4
- Romans 4:1-5
- Galatians 3
- Hebrews 4:14-16
- Hebrews 7:1-10
- Second Peter 2:5-10

GOING DEEPER

(3)

God stepped down to earth and made a covenant promise with Abraham. What does this reveal to us about God? What does it reveal about His desire for the people He has created?

Abraham believed, and this belief is what gave him righteousness. Galatians 3:8 says "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." What does Abraham's experience teach us about the Gospel?

In the same way God enacted and kept His covenant with Abraham, He has done so in the moment of salvation for us. How does God's faithfulness to Abraham give you confidence in times of uncertainty? How does it motivate you to live your live for God's glory?

The fact that God set in motion His plan for salvation all the way back in the time of Abraham is a testimony of His great love for us. Take some time to thank God for graciously pursuing us, and for His powerful Gospel that has given us salvation through Jesus Christ.



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Family life can be complicated. What are some of the unique challenges you have faced because of your own family dynamic?

What are you looking forward to in your life that hasn't happened yet? Graduation? Employment? Marriage? What are you waiting for?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

During the time of Abram it would not have been uncommon for infertile couples to bear children through their female servants in order to produce a male heir to perpetuate the family line. It was also not unusual for men to have multiple wives and multiple children with each wife.

The "way of Shur" where the angel finds Hagar (Gen. 16:7) is the area between southern Israel and northern Egypt.

SUMMARY

In Genesis 16 Abram and Sarai take matters into their own hands when it comes to fulfilling God's promise to bring forth a nation through them. Sarai gives her servant Hagar to Abram as a second wife, and she conceived a child. This caused a rift between Sarai and Hagar, and Hagar fled into the wilderness. God sent an angel to visit Hagar, and promised her that a huge nation would result from her son. Hagar then gave birth to a son, and named him Ishmael as God had instructed her to do. In Genesis 17 God comes to visit Abram to re-establish His covenant with him, and in the process he renames him "Abraham." As a sign of this covenant God institutes the practice of circumcision for all boys when they are eight days old. God then promises that Sarai herself will have a son, in spite of the fact that both her and Abraham were both over 90 years old. This news is so incredible to Abraham he fell on his face and laughed, and offered Ishmael as the solution to God's plan. God told Abraham that Sarai would give birth within the next year.

INSIGHTS

For Abraham and Sarah it was culturally acceptable to allow Abraham to have a sexual union with Hagar in order to produce a child, but at the same time it went against the clear commands and promises God had given to them. It was not God's desire for them to conceive their "promised" son through Hagar, since God then provided Isaac through Sarai.

Humanly speaking, the circumstances Abraham and Sarai faced seemed daunting. They had gotten so old, and waited such a long time, that the possibility that God would fulfill the promise to birth a nation through them became impossible to believe. When we face this kind of tension, it's important to remember that God sees what we do not see, and knows what we do not know. In fact, in Isaiah 55:8 God says "your ways are not My ways.," and Proverbs 3:5 says "trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." God is trustworthy...He has demonstrated this through His faithfulness in sending Jesus to die for us on the cross. God is powerful...He has demonstrated this in Jesus rising from the dead. Now that we are able to look back on the story of Abraham and Sarai, we can see what they could not. God's plan was perfect, and He fulfilled every promise He made. That's an incredible encouragement!

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Isaiah 55:8-9
- Matthew 1:1-2
- Romans 4
 - Galatians 4:21-5:1

TWO BROTHERS, TWO NATIONS

GOING DEEPER

What are some choices you face that are culturally acceptable but Biblically prohibited? How do you respond when faced with the temptation to trust in the wisdom of the world rather than the wisdom of God's Word?

Are you patient? Part of the struggle for Abraham and Sarah faced was that it took a long time for God's promise to be fulfilled, and they became impatient. Patience can be defined as the ability to calmly endure in challenging situations, How do you respond when circumstances are difficult, when things don't happen in the manner or timing you desire? Are you anxious and irritable, or do you calmly endure?

God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and Sarah in spite of their disobedience to Him. Can you think of a time when you've felt humbled by God's grace toward you? How aware are you on a daily basis that the blood of Jesus covers your sin and enables you to be used by God for His glory?

Consider the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-2...God used the miraculous birth of Isaac to eventually provide our Savior Jesus through a miraculous virgin birth. Spend some time thanking God for His perfect Gospel plan, that by His grace He always intended to bring forth Jesus to live a perfect life and to die for our sins.

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GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What have you recently observed in the news that you found difficult to believe? What was your response?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

At this time in Abraham and Sarah's life they were very old and very wealthy, with over 300 servants. They had settled in Mamre (which means "fatness"), which was about twenty miles south of Bethlehem, the town Jesus would be born in over 2,000 years later.

SUMMARY

When Abraham was visited by the Lord and two angels, he showed them superb hospitality (Gen. 18:1–8). The Lord and His angels confirmed God's promise that Sarah would have a son. As Sarah overheard the message, she laughed in utter disbelief because of her old age (Gen. 18:9–15); she thought it was too hard for the Lord. When confronted by the Lord with her doubting laughter, Sarah then lied, denying she had laughed. Interestingly, when the baby was born, he was called "Isaac", which means 'he laughs'. In spite of Sarah's behavior, God was faithful, even when one of His people was not.

As the angels left, the Lord told Abraham about the judgment of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:16–21) where Abraham's nephew Lot lived. Abraham was chosen by God and was to instruct his family to keep the way of the Lord by living with righteousness and justice (Gen. 18:19).

via Wiersbe in BF OBEDIENT from the "BF" COMMENTARY SERIES!

"| ()RD" In Genesis 18, the word for Lord is translated as Yahweh or Jehovah which is the proper name of the God of Israel.

HOW TO SERVE

SERVE Though Abraham was very old and wealthy, he served the Lord PERSONALLY anyway. Abraham could have entrusted this task to one his more than 300 servants (Gen. 14:14). Instead of passing off the task, Abraham ministered to the Lord personally.

SERVE Abraham could have ignored his guests by pretending to be asleep, or IMMEDIATELY he could have had them wait until he had finished resting. But since true faith does not delay when it comes to serving the Lord, Abraham ministered immediately.

SERVE Though he was old and prestigious, Abraham ran to meet the visitors SPEEDILY (Gen. 18:2) and quickly told tell Sarah to bake some bread (Gen. 18:6). He ran to get a tender calf and saw to it that the young man hastened to prepare it (Gen. 18:7). Only after he had served his guests did Abraham stand still (Gen. 18:8).

SERVE Abraham wasn't cheap, but gave the best that he had. Sarah baked GENEROUSLy bread from "fine meal" (Gen. 18:6) and the meat was "tender and good" (Gen. 18:7). No leftovers or second-rate fare for such important guests!

SFRVF Abraham's service was marked with humility, after all, his visitors HUMBLY came in the heat of the day. He bowed to his guests (Gen. 18:2) and called himself a servant (Gen. 18:3, 18:5). He served the three visitors and then stood near to be available if needed.

SERVE Finally, Abraham served the Lord cooperatively as he involved others. COOPERATIVELy Sarah baked the bread; a young man dressed the meat; and no doubt other servants brought Abraham the curds and milk.

SARAH LAUGHS

OTHER SCRIPTURE Hebrews 13:2 Matthew 10:41 Romans 9:18 Ecclesiastes 7:6 Mark 9:24

GOING DEEPER

What causes people to doubt God? How about you? What circumstances in your life tend to bring doubt? How do you handle it when you face doubt?

Consider God's response to Sarah: "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14) How are these words a comfort to you? When is it most difficult for you to believe that God is in complete control?

In Genesis 18:15, Sarah foolishly tried to hide her sin by lying about it. When she was discovered, she became afraid. How do you normally respond when God convicts you of sin? When your sin is exposed, are you afraid to admit your mistakes?

God's faithfulness to Sarah, as well as His subsequent faithfulness through Christ, ought to give us tremendous confidence and hope in the midst of our doubt. Take a few minutes to thank God for the Gospel truth that, in spite of our persistent sin and selfishness, God is faithful to save as demonstrated by the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. 8



GETTING STARTED

Are there any things from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What images of God have you seen in popular culture with respect to Sodom and Gomorrah?

Have you had any experiences when you feared for your safety? How do you typically respond when you are afraid?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The main characters in this section of Scripture are Abraham, Lot, Lot's daughters, Lot's wife, and two angels. In Genesis 13 the Bible says that Abraham and Lot settled in different directions; Abraham chose the Land of Canaan and Lot moved his family east to the Jordan Valley, an area which included Sodom and Gomorrah. Many believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were located on the southeastern plains of the Dead Sea in what is now the country of Jordan.

SUMMARY

God comes to Abraham and tells him that Sodom and Gomorrah will be destroyed for its wickedness. Abraham responds to God with a request that God might not destroy the city if fifty righteous people could be found. God honors Abraham's request. Abraham repeats this request five more times, whittling the number of required righteous residents of Sodom and Gomorrah to ten. Ten righteous people could not be found between the two cities. Fortunately, the narrative doesn't end with God destroying Sodom and Gomorrah after speaking with Abraham. Instead, God sends two angels to Sodom and Gomorrah to come rescue and lead Lot and his family out of the city before it is destroyed.

Lot meets the two angels at the town center, thinking they are sojourners passing through, and invites them to stay with him. The depravity of Sodom is demonstrated as the men in the city come knocking on Lot's door that evening seeking to rape the angels Lot had invited to his house. Although Lot's willingness to protect his visitors is admirable, he does this in a both shocking and inexcusable manner by offering his two daughters to be raped by the mob. At this point the mob turns their attention towards Lot in anger, who they perceive to be an outsider judging them. The angels come to Lot's rescue by blinding the men at the door and pull Lot back into safety.

As the following morning dawns the angels urged Lot and his family to flee Sodom. As they fled from Sodom, Lot's wife disobeyed the command to not look back on Sodom and is turned into a pillar of salt. After arriving at Zoar, Lot moved with his two daughters to the hills to live in a cave. After moving to the cave, Lot's daughters fear that everyone else has been destroyed and they alone are left. Therefore, they get their dad drunk so that they could each sleep with their father and their line would continue.

WRATH TOWARDS

GOD'S RIGHTFOUS The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah echoes God's righteous wrath poured out on wickedness via the flood in Genesis 6-9, as well as God's final judgment that will take place in the future (Second Peter SIN 2:4-10). God's righteous judgment demonstrated in this passage often makes people uncomfortable. Many ask the question, "If God is loving, why would He ever destroy people or cities?" The challenge with this question is that it rests on the faulty premise that we are good and deserves to be loved and accepted by God. Ephesians 2:1-5, however show us that we are all born as children of wrath deserving God's righteous judgment. Therefore, the question we should be asking is, "If God is just and righteous and we are born wicked, why does God not destroy us at the moment of birth?"

GRACE DEMONSTRATED TN RESCUING

GOD'S BOUNTIFUL The answer to the question of why God does not destroy us at the moment of birth is found in Ephesians 2:6-9. God does not destroy us because He is rich in mercy. This rich mercy is demonstrated in Genesis 19:16. In response to Lot's lingering, God, "being rich in mercy," PEOPLE orchestrates the angels to literally seize Lot and drag him and his family out of the city so that they will not be destroyed with the city. What a beautiful picture of the Gospel. God, being great in mercy, drags us out of coming destruction so that we might be rescued and redeemed!

Ephesians 2:4-5

Second Peter 2:4-10

GOING DEEPER

In what ways has the story found in Genesis 18:22-19:38 changed the way you view God, sin, judgment, and grace?

How does our view of God change if we began with the premise that we deserve to be judged as opposed to we deserve to be loved?

How is the Gospel distorted or incomplete when we view God purely as one enacting wrath and judgment? How about when we view God purely as one who is merciful and does not execute judgment?

A deeper Gospel understanding of God's righteous judgment and merciful love will naturally motivate us to honor God in the way we live our lives. Spend some time praying and thanking God both for His righteous judgment and His merciful love. How great God's love is for us through Jesus Christ!

ABIMELECH



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

Have you had an occasion in your life when you've repeated the same mistake more than once? Why did this happen? How did you feel about your choice?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Abraham is married to Sarah and has been promised children by God, but at this point they have not had any. Sarah was very beautiful; whenever they traveled, men from other areas wanted her as their own. As Sarah aged and Abraham's wealth increased, however, the motives for wanting Sarah may have changed. Taking Sarah into a harem would have connected the ruler of the land to Abraham in a political sense, who by this point was rich and influential. Abraham and Sarah tell people they are brother and sister (which is half truth, but a full deception) in order to protect Abraham when they journey together.

SUMMARY

Abraham traveled south and made some journeys in the area of Gerar. Abraham told people that his wife Sarah was actually his sister, and so Abimelech, the king of Gerar, took Sarah for his own. God came to Abimelech in a vision and harshly warned him not to touch Sarah because she was already someone's wife. Abimelech pled for his life and explained his innocent motives in taking her. God reassured Abimelech that he kept him from sinning, and told Abimelech that he needed to give Sarah back if he wanted to live.

Abimelech brought Abraham in and confronted him, asking why he let Sarah be taken. Abraham explained that based on his impression of the city, he had

assumed they would kill him and take his wife either way – and besides, she was technically his sister, because she was his half-sister. Abraham explained that he had told Sarah to say he's her brother anytime they traveled together and that this was the front they put on to anyone they didn't know.

Abimelech gave Sarah back to Abraham, along with gifts, and told him that he's welcome to stay. He also gave Abraham a large amount of money to prove Sarah's innocence. Abraham went to God on Abimelech's behalf, and God, who had prevented Abimelech's wife and slaves from having children as soon as Sarah was taken, healed the women of Abimelech's house.

INSIGHTS

REPEATED SIN This is not the first time Abraham and Sarah had used deception. In Genesis 12:10-20, when Sarah and Abraham (at the time, called Sarai and Abram) were traveling in Egypt, Pharaoh took Sarah into his house before he knew she was Abram's wife, and God brought plagues into his home because of it. When Pharaoh found out the truth, he sent Sarai and Abram away.

RIGHT MOTIVES Just because we have the right motives does not necessarily mean VS INNOCENCE we are free from sin. Because Abimelech's heart was right, God prevented him from committing worse sin. God is the one who reveals truth to us – we cannot trust our own hearts or motives. (Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19)

TRUSTING
OURSELVES
VSAbraham and Sarah were probably thinking that if someone wanted
Sarah, either way Sarah would be taken, but at least Abraham's life
wouldn't be lost in the process if they could get away with this lie. This
makes sense in human terms, but it doesn't account for God's terms –
that we should trust Him to work in the situation. We shouldn't
assume that we have to be the ones in control of the situation.
Instead, we should trust and let God do His work.

HALF TRUTHS = Abraham and Sarah were technically telling the truth, but in using this LIES "truth" to deceive, it made their claim a full-on sinful deception. This is the same type of method we see the serpent using in the garden when he deceives Eve. If we are twisting words in order to make someone believe something that isn't fully true, this is not any better than telling an outright lie.

ABIMELECH

OTHER SCRIPTURE Genesis 12:10-20 Genesis 26:1-33 Genesis 21:22-34 Ephesians 2:1-10

GOING DEEPER

Abraham is commonly referred to as the "Father of Faith." but as we see from this passage, even he struggled with his faith. What can we learn from Abraham's faith struggles?

Abraham is often hailed as a man of faith, and yet in this chapter we see him trusting his own devices rather than God. Why do you think it was easier for Abraham to deal with this challenge via deception rather than the truth? Is there is situation you are currently facing in your life where you need to trust in God rather than in yourself?

Why are we often tempted to fear man rather than to fear God? How does the Gospel truth that God accepts us unconditionally give us free to not live in fear of others?

Take a few minutes to thank God for providing Jesus to save us from our need to lie because of our fear of man. Remember God's grace to cover the sins in your past, and thank Him for Gospel power to move forward in your life.

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ISAAC



GETTING STARTED

Is there anything from this week's message that stood out to you or that you have questions about?

What is the biggest risk you've ever taken? What made the situation risky?

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Years had passed since the events of Genesis 20, when Abraham had lied about his wife Sarah. During that time, it was evident that God was blessing Abraham and Sarah. Not only was Abraham's wealth increasing, but a miracle son had been born named Isaac. Abraham was restored to fellowship with the Lord with the purpose of ministry and blessing that would come through Isaac.

SUMMARY

In Genesis 21, God provided the child of promise to Abraham and to Sarah at the very time God had promised (see Gen. 18:10). Abraham and Sarah responded in faith by naming him Isaac, by circumcising him according to the covenant, and praising God for this fulfillment (Gen. 21:6–7). The name Isaac ("he laughs") is explained; when God gave Sarah laughter (Gen. 21:6), it was actually joy. Her laughter of unbelief (Gen. 18:12) was now changed to rejoicing and many would rejoice with her. But Ishmael turned her laughter into a ridiculing mockery of God's work. God used this to drive out the child Ishmael and his mother Hagar (Gen. 21:8–13), as they represented a threat to the promised seed.

After God told Abraham to send Ishmael away (Gen 21:12-13), He told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Though Isaac was the son of promise, God told Abraham to "take your son, your only son Isaac whom you love..." (Gen 22:2). Abraham's response

was staggering – he obeyed instantly and without questioning. (Gen. 22:3–8) He immediately made a 50 mile journey from Beersheba to Mount Moriah. In Chapter 22 we see that both Abraham and Isaac obediently responded to God's request to sacrifice Isaac. At the last moment, God stepped in by providing a ram as a substitute offering. In the midst of this ordeal, Abraham and Isaac were faithful by keeping their eye on God's promises rather than their circumstances.

Chapter 23 sadly concludes with Sarah's death and burial in cave of Machpelah.

INSIGHTS

via Wiersbe in WIERSBE'S EXPOSITORY OUTLINES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT¹

FORESHADOWING JESUS This amazing event in Abraham and Isaac's life points directly to Christ, God's only Son who was willing to give His life to please His Father. Both Isaac and Christ were promised sons, and both were born miraculously. Both brought joy to the heart of the father, and both were born at the appointed time. Both were persecuted by their brethren, and both were obedient unto death. The most significant difference, of course, was that while both were willing to die, only Jesus Himself became a blood sacrifice.

TEST OF FAITH True faith is always tested. God did not want Isaac's life, He wanted Abraham's heart. Isaac was dear to Abraham, and God wanted to be sure that Isaac was not an idol standing between Him and Abraham. It was possible that Abraham was trusting Isaac to fulfill the promises and not trusting God. How did Abraham go through this test? Abraham rested in God's promise of many descendants, which couldn't be fulfilled without Isaac. Abraham knew that God would not lie, so he rested in His unchanging Word. One commentator wisely remarked, "Never doubt in the dark what God has told you in the light."

UNEXPECTED GRACE When Abraham became distressed because of Sarah's request to remove Hagar and Ishmael, God assured Abraham that Ishmael would have a future because he too was Abraham's offspring (Gen. 21:11–13). Even though there was sin and opposition, God mercifully dealt with Hagar and Ismael while protecting the genetic line of Jesus.

FAITH AND WORKS Note that Abraham was not saved when he offered Isaac on the altar. Abraham had placed his faith in God years before when he trusted God's promise (Gen. 15:6) Even though we are not saved by doing the right thing, truth faith will always produce good works.

OTHER SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 15:5
- Romans 4:1-5
- Galatians 4:29
- James 1:12-15
- Hebrews 11:17-19

GOING DEEPER

Is there anything in your life that, if God asked you, would feel impossible for you to give up? Is there anything in your life that, through Scripture or spiritual authority. God has asked you to give up but you are struggling to let go of?

Read James 2:14–26, and consider the relationship between faith and works. James uses the lives of Abraham & Isaac to illustrate that true faith is always proven by obedience. James is not telling us that we are saved by works or by sacrifice, but that the proof of saving faith is an obedient life (see Romans 4:1–5 and Galatians 3:6). How have you understood the relationship between faith and doing good works? Do you believe that you must do good to please God? If so, how do these passages of Scripture show you God's plan is different? In Genesis 22:7 Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb?" and God supplied a ram. Ultimately, the answer to Isaac's question came in the Person of Jesus Christ. In John 1:29 John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God!"⁷ What has your understanding about the link between the Old Testament and Jesus? How does Genesis 21-22 in particular point to THE Lamb, Jesus Christ?

Take a few minutes to pray and thank God for providing Jesus as the sacrificial lamb for our sins. Consider anything in your life that might be standing in between you and a life lived faithfully for Jesus. Thank God for giving you the Gospel to empower you to pursue Christ with your heart, soul, mind and strength.

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