

The Promised Kingdom
Apprentice Track Workshop
Session 2

Introduction

Question: Tell me about something in your life that was hard to wait for.

[Ross]

1) Genesis 12-50 - Summary and Outline

a) Summary:

- i) So, what do all these 38 chapters in Genesis cover? They give us a view into the lives and families of Abraham, his son Isaac, and his son Jacob. (These three are also known as the Patriarchs). And understanding this family line is crucial to our understanding of the Bible. Because through them God begins to unfold his plan of redemption, which we can summarize in a few phrases. **God's special *people*, will live in God's special *place*, under God's special *rule*.** People, place, and rule.
- ii) We can summarize this part of Genesis like this: *God is making a gracious covenant with one man and his descendants which will bless the entire world. In this covenant God has promised to be their God. He also promises, unilaterally, that they will be His special people, that they will live in the place of His choosing, and that they will enjoy a unique relationship with Him, under His rule.*

b) OUTLINE:

- i) Abraham (Genesis 12-24)
- ii) Isaac (Genesis 25-27)
- iii) Jacob (Genesis 28-50)

[Justin]

2) God and Abraham (Genesis 12-24)

READ 12:1-13 - ¹Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

a) Covenant –

- i) God's opening words to Abraham are words of promise, words of covenant. And while the word covenant isn't used here, this passage serves as a foundation for the covenant he will formally establish with Abraham in Genesis 15 and then renew in Genesis 17.

- ii) What is a covenant? A covenant is an oath-bound relationship between two or more parties. So God here is binding himself to Abraham and his descendants in a relationship with them making unilateral one-sided promises to them.
- iii) As we said last week, covenant or promise is one of the major themes in all of Scripture. God is a promising, covenant making, covenant-keeping God and these covenants, especially his covenant with Abraham form the backbone, the skeletal structure of the whole bible. Going forward from here we'll see how all the flesh of the rest of the story hangs on this structure.

b) Components of the Abrahamic Covenant

i) Overflowing Blessing

- (1) This word blessing is repeated 5 times in two verses. It is by far the most emphasized idea in this promise. God would bless Abraham and his nation in order to bless others.
- (2) There is a lot we could draw from this but important to the story is to note that this idea of blessing is the exact opposite of what God did in Genesis 3. Back then he brought curses, with only a shadow of a hint as to how he would reverse that curse. Here we see our first piece of the puzzle. God will reverse the curse through the blessing of one man and his descendants. He is beginning to rewrite the script. Because through this one line, all the families of the earth would also be blessed.

[Ross]

- ii) A Great Nation- The very first promise he states is that he will make Abraham's descendants into a nation. What is a nation? What does it take to have a nation? Well first it takes a land, a territory, a *place*. Second, to have a nation you must have a population, without people you can't have a nation. Third, to have a nation you need a government. Without authority, laws, and someone to defend the rights of the population, a nation cannot exist. We'll look at each of these components of the kingdom.

(1) Land –

- (a) In 12:1 God promises Abraham a land. This land is significant because you'll remember that with Adam and Eve's sin they were driven out of the perfect land of Eden. The land promised here to Abraham, the land of Canaan, was a real historic location. But it also serves as a picture of a greater reality to come – that new creation at the end of time. Through his promise to Abraham God is reversing the fall and plans to reestablish a place like Eden.¹

¹ Everything in the Old Testament needs to be understood as foreshadowing of greater realities in the New Testament. And those New Testament realities need to be understood as a return to the Edenic conditions God's creatures once enjoyed. So here is an illustration that the teacher may find helpful and can use if he deems it necessary: Consider a slide-projector. It has a light inside which shines through a slide, and projected up on the screen is a large beautiful picture. Well everything in the Old Testament (land, seed, blessing, kingdom, king, priesthood, sacrifices, tabernacles, temple, prophets, etc) are like the *slide* in the projector. By themselves they aren't very exciting. They are small and hard to see. You certainly can't see any detail. Well, they weren't meant to be viewed by themselves. They are all intended to go into the projector and be

- (b) So, he finally reaches the land travelling north to south and goes to Shechem, right in the middle of Canaan. Then keeps travelling south and has to end up leaving the land and going to Egypt because of famine. So no sooner than he reaches the land and he has to leave. What is God doing here? God is not in a hurry, he grows things.
- (c) When Abraham returns, God gives him more precision about what land will be his. First he defends Lot by taking his small army and chasing his enemies all the way to the north end of the region, to Dan. And then God makes a covenant with him and promises Abraham all the land from “the river of Egypt (in the south) to the great river, the Euphrates river (in the north).” (15:18-20). And for the rest of the Old Testament this becomes Israel’s historic possession, we’ll hear the phrase all the time, “from Dan to Beersheba”, from the north to the south.
- (d) But Abraham was a wanderer his whole life. He was a migrant herdsman. And though he lived in the promised land, he never owned it. His whole existence as a nomad was spent competing with the gentile kingdoms that already inhabited the land he was promised. He is constantly roaming for pasture and water not owning a land for himself. In fact, the only plot of land Abraham officially owned during his lifetime was the grave-plot where he buried his wife, and he doesn’t secure this until the very end of his life in chapter 23.
- (e) God is not in a hurry, he grows things.

[Justin]

- (2) People: The second thing Abraham will need for a nation is a people, a populace. From Abraham will descend that Godly line, which originated with the woman Eve, who will eventually give birth to the Savior of the world. All well and good. But Sarai is unable to conceive and Abraham is getting old! So how is this going to happen? Well, Abraham and Sarai have a couple ideas for how this could work:

- (i) Idea #1: Eliezer – God’s answer: no way!

illuminated up on the screen. Then you can see all the colors and shapes and details that go into making a beautiful picture. So it is with the Old Testament. The land, the king, the priests, and so on, were never meant to be ends in themselves. They are meant to project forward to something far greater. It’s as though the light behind them is the pattern in Eden, they, as the slide, serve as the pattern, but it’s the New Testament reality that is the goal of the whole projector idea. As it says in Colossians 2:17: “These are a shadow of the things what were to come; the reality however is found in Christ.”

1. God has promised Abram that he would make him into a great nation. Then, verse 2: ² But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”
2. Abraham was 75 years old when the promises of chapter 12 were made, and his entire life his wife, Sarah, had been barren. Now he’s beginning to doubt if he’ll ever have one son, let alone an entire nation’s worth of sons. So God reaffirms His promise to Abraham in verse 5.

(ii) Idea #2: Hagar and Ishmael – God’s answer: no way!- So this time Abraham’s wife, Sarai, proposes an idea- Abram will sleep with her slave and produce an heir that way. They go through with the plan but God totally shuts it down and redirects Hagar and Ishmael to a different destiny.

(iii) Idea #3: Isaac – Sarah’s reaction: laughter! – And sure enough, Sarah does give birth to a baby boy 9 months later. But curiously- or devastatingly- when Isaac becomes a young man God commands Abraham to kill him. And once again we have to ask- what is God doing? How is to build a nation if he kills off Abraham’s only rightful descendent? Now, God does provide a substitute for Isaac and preserves his life, but even still at the end of Abraham’s life- this is his only child through Sarah. Not a great start to nation building.

[Ross]

(3) Government/Rule - Third, then, let’s turn to consider the government and reign of this nation. Now, significantly, this aspect of God’s plan is least clear in the story of Abraham. The nation isn’t formed and so no government is present. But we do learn about the what the government of future Israel will look like.

- (i) First, God will reign over his people. Notice how God leads and provides and interacts with Abraham throughout his life. God is with him and leading him like a king.
- (ii) But then second, we get a glimpse at the future monarchy of Israel. Look at God’s promise to Sarai in 17:16 – “I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of people shall come from her.”

[Justin]

3) **GOD AND ISAAC:**

- a) Well, Abraham does finally have a son. And naturally, the reader is wondering if this is the promised one? Well, as we read on, we find out the answer is no. Isaac makes a lot of the same mistakes his father made, and he dies without seeing the promises fulfilled.

- b) He really only comes on the scene in a major way for a couple of chapters around 26-27 of Genesis, he is simply a connecting figure from Abraham to rest of his line.

- c) But, Isaac doesn't die without an heir through whom the promises can continue. So is his son Esau the one who will receive the blessing and carry the Kingdom of God forward? He is after all the firstborn. Surprisingly, the answer is no. His younger brother, Jacob, is the heir of the covenant! God has, through His free choice, decided that it is through Jacob that His plan of redemption will continue.

[Ross]

4) **GOD AND JACOB** – As we move to the next Generation we will continue to trace the same two aspects of the Abrahamic covenant – Blessing and Nation (with people, land, and government)

a) **Nation**

i) People:

(1) Abraham had only one legitimate son. Isaac had two, but only one was included in the promise. Now Jacob has twelve sons, and things really start moving. At least numerically-speaking, as Jacob's family (remember, God renamed Jacob Israel), starts to grow into the great nation God had promised.

(2) We finally move from addition to multiplication.

ii) Land

- (1) Jacob is forced to live much of his life outside the promised land because he is so afraid of living near Esau, the brother he had cheated. Again, we ask, what is God doing?
- (2) Finally after over 20 years, God allows Jacob to return south to the promised land. And by the end of Jacob's life the main focus of the story turns to his 11th son, Joseph. And as you may remember, it is through Joseph that Jacob's family, the promised heirs, and the seed of the woman, end up in Egypt for 400 years. Joseph is sold into slavery and taken to Egypt where he rises to prominence, only to get thrown into prison. From this lowest of lows, he providentially is raised again to be the second in command over the entire kingdom. And then when a famine hits Canaan, Jacob sends the rest of his brothers down to Egypt for relief. There they are reunited with Joseph and he invites the entire clan down to Egypt, to the abundant region of Goshen, in order to find shelter from the famine.
- (3) Joseph is the gateway to Goshen but this really looks like a colossal step backward with regard to the promised land and the status as a nation.
- (4) The only glimmer of hope is that Jacob does return their, though not alive. He is buried on the same plot of land his grandfather Abraham had purchased. So there is still an enduring legal claim within the promised land.

[Justin]

iii) Reign/Government - Now at this point, we might think that Joseph is the One Seed of the woman who would fulfill the covenant blessings of Abraham. But it turns out that instead it will come through his brother, Judah.

(1) **Genesis 49:8** - This is a prophecy from Jacob concerning **Judah**, one of his sons.

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
 your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
 your father's sons shall bow down before you.”

(2) Do you hear the language from Genesis 3:15 there – putting down the neck of his enemies? And look at **verse 10**.

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
 nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,

until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

- (3) What we have here is a prophecy that through Judah will come a ruler, a king, for the people. And that king will be the one who triumphs over Satan, crushing his head. Jesus, of course. The words of this prophecy are a little vague, admittedly, but this concept will become clearer as we continue through the Old Testament.

b) Blessing

- (1) God curses Jacob’s enemies while fabulously blessing him to the benefit of his allies.

(a) While in his 20 year exile serving his uncle Laban we are told that Jacob’s flocks multiply. Everything he touches turns to gold. And not only does Jacob receive blessing, so does Laban- so Jacob can say in 30:29-30a: *“²⁹ So Jacob said to [Laban], “You know how I have served you and how your herds have fared with me. ³⁰ For you had very little before I came, but now your wealth has increased. The Lord has blessed you because of me.”*

(b) But, Laban also turns on Jacob, and tricks him into staying an extra 7 years- and as a result, as Jacob leaves, he plays a trick in return. He selectively breeds the flocks with the result that Laban’s flock receives all the weak animals, while his goats retain the strongest and healthiest. The one who had cursed Abraham’s grandson received cursing.

(c) We see further cursing in the tragic story of Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, in Genesis 34. When she is raped by a Hivite prince, Jacob’s sons massacre and plunder an entire city by convincing all the men to get circumcised and overpowering them in their vulnerable state.

(d) Jacob the trickster raises tricksters himself who become the means of fulfilling the Abrahamic curses.

- (2) As Joseph rises through the ranks in Egypt, he brings blessing to everyone within his sphere of influence.

(a) Potiphar’s household

(b) Fellow prisoners

(c) Pharaoh and the nation as a whole

(d) And then finally he provides refuge for all of Abraham's descendants.

[Ross]

5) Three Main Themes of Scripture

a) **King/Kingdom** - as we end Genesis, we're beginning to see God's people created.

i) They are still under God's rule, though not always trusting him perfectly.

ii) They have the small beginnings of a nation, though they are not dwelling in his special place.

iii) And they clearer picture of the snake crusher who will descend from Judah, though admittedly it is still vague.

b) **Presence**

i) God's people are out of his special place, the new Eden.

ii) But in all their wandering and exiles God has been with them and is blessing them immensely with livestock and descendants. His presence among them is miraculously undeniable.

[Justin]

a) **Promise** –

i) Passing Between two animal carcasses (Genesis 15) - "if I don't hold up my end of the deal, may it be done to me as it was done to these animals."

- (1) Remember, a covenant, in this context, is a solemn bond and agreement between two parties, with terms and conditions, that can only be broken upon the penalty of death.
 - (2) This is how covenants were often established between two parties in the ANE. Both parties would pass between the animals and in doing so said,²
- ii) Only God takes on the risk of the curses of the covenant. In other words—this is a covenant God will deliver on *regardless* of Abraham’s obedience.
- (1) Notice, when it comes time for God and Abraham to ratify the covenant together, God puts Abraham to sleep and he does it alone. And only God passes through, only God takes on the risk of the curses of the covenant. In other words—this is a covenant God will deliver on *regardless* of Abraham’s obedience. It is a covenant of grace. Yet in the very next chapter Abraham would prove faithless.
 - (2) And in fact every generation of Abraham’s descendants would prove faithless, yet just as he said, God was still faithful. And that faithfulness climaxed on the day when he actually enacted the consequences of the covenant made here. He bore the curse of the covenant and was slaughtered- not for his faithlessness but for his peoples.

² But notice, if you will, that Abraham does not pass through the dead animals. Only God does. And notice that there are no obligations for Abraham to keep up his end of the covenant. There are only promises coming down from God! This covenant is completely unilateral, in that God has set all the terms, and entirely unconditional. God *will* keep these promises regardless of Abraham’s and his descendants’ actions. Now, this does not mean that Abraham’s descendants will have no obligations at all. The conditions that Abraham’s descendants have to meet will be added later? When will that be? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] They will receive some duties in Genesis 17, but the bulk of Israel’s covenant responsibilities will be given from Mount Sinai, after God leads them out of slavery through His servant Moses. More on that later. The point I’m trying to make now, is that the promise comes before the obligations. So while Israel has real duties, and there will be real consequences if they are not faithful, the promises will still stand. This is because God’s plan of redemption, of which this is a part, depends on *His* grace and His desire to renew the universe with a renewed humanity in it. It does not depend on sinful man. We’ve seen how far sinful man has gotten. **Galatians 3:17-18**: “The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.”