

# A Shared Promise: The Covenant with Abraham

**Genesis 12:1-3**

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 3 of 14



Previously in this series

# A Shared Origin: The Story of Creation

Genesis 1 – 2

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 1 of 14



Previously in this series

# A Shared Tragedy: Sin and Its Effects

Genesis 3 – 11

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

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# A Shared Promise

- After the story of Babel, the rest of **Genesis 11** gives us the line **Shem** the son of Noah – the **Semitic** people.
- The family of Abram is introduced in **Genesis 11:27-32**.
- This brings us to our main text for today.

# A Shared Promise

- **Genesis 12:1-3** (ESV)

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families [‘clans’ – a level below a tribe] of the earth shall be blessed.”

# A Shared Promise

- As people on earth were multiplying, they were now separating into nations.
- God chose **one man**, from which he would bring **one nation**, through which he would reveal himself **to the world**.
- Though God chose **one people** for himself, his heart has always been to bless **all the families of the earth**.

# A Shared Promise

- The promises to Abraham relate to **land, posterity, and blessing**.<sup>1</sup>
- Another way to look at them is that they are **personal, national and universal**.<sup>2</sup>

# A Shared Promise

The **personal** promises to Abraham include:

- The special blessing of God
- A great name
- That he would be a channel of divine blessing to others
- That God would deal with others on the basis of their attitude toward him
- An heir by Sarah (See **Gen. 15:4**)

# A Shared Promise

The **national** promises to Abraham were:

- Assurance that he would become **a great nation** – and even “**nations.**” (**Gen. 17:6**)
- The covenant would be established with **his offspring** for an everlasting covenant. (**Gen. 17:7**)
- The land of Canaan would be given to him for an everlasting possession. (**Gen. 17:8**)

# A Shared Promise

The **universal** promises to Abraham fell into two parts, both found in **Genesis 12:3**.

- “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse.”
  - This is both personal and universal – pertaining to both Abraham and the nations, each in their own way.
- “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” “

# A Shared Promise

- God knew, understood and desired to bless Abraham as an individual – in a very personal way.
- At the same time, Abraham would be blessed in order to be a blessing.
- When God deals with us as unique individuals it is never simply to work with us, bless us and leave it at that.
- He wants his blessing to flow out into the world.

# A Shared Promise

- Once again, as people on earth were multiplying, they were now separating into nations.
- God chose one man, from which he would bring one nation, through which he would reveal himself to the world.
- We will now see how that story begins to unfold.

# A Shared Promise

- In **Genesis 15**, we find the story of God ratifying the covenant with Abraham.
- Abraham's response of faith sets the standard for the rest of the Bible.
- More on this later.

# A Shared Promise

- A key element of this story is that God enters into the covenant with Abraham while the latter is sleeping.
- The agreement is rather one-sided.
- God makes promises to Abraham that he will fulfill.

# A Shared Promise

- The promise of Isaac is found in **Genesis 17:1 – 18:15**.
- **17:5** Abram means “exalted father.”
- Abraham means “father of a multitude.”
- **17:15** Sarai and Sarah are both variants of “princess.”

# A Shared Promise

- The birth of Isaac is in **Genesis 21:1-7**.
- The name **Isaac** means “**he laughs**.”
- The covenant is repeated after the story in which God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son in **Genesis 22:15-18**.

# A Shared Promise

- The promise is passed on to Isaac in **Genesis 26:1-5**.
- And then to Jacob. See **Genesis 28:1-5, 10-15**.
- When God hears his people's prayers in Egypt, he does so on the basis of this covenant. See **Exodus 2:23-25**.

# A Shared Promise

- When we arrive in the **New Testament**, we begin to see how the blessing promised to Abraham goes out to the nations.
- It is confirmed in the ministries of both Jesus and the apostles.

# A Shared Promise

For example, take these texts in the Gospels:

- Faith of a Centurion in **Matthew 8:5-13**, esp. **v. 11**.
- Surrounding the birth of Jesus in **Luke 1:54-55, 68, 72-75**.

# A Shared Promise

The apostles also echo the covenant with Abraham as part of the message they proclaimed:

- Peter preaching fellow Jews in **Acts 3:25-26**.
- Paul speaking to Gentiles in **Romans 11:1, 25**.
- Paul explains faith in relation to Abraham in **Galatians 3:6-29**.

A Shared Promise      Conclusions

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- All of us share a common origin in our first parents – Adam and Eve.
- Sadly, the tragic results of sin have spread to us all as well.

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- Our shared problem of sin was not something we were able to solve on our own.
- God had to step in and intervene.
- He reveals the beginning of his solution in the covenant he makes with Abraham.

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- This covenant consisted of promises that were **personal**, **national** and **universal**.
- The **personal** promises apply to Abraham.
- The **national** promises apply to his offspring, who we know as the people of Israel.
- The **universal** promises apply to all the nations on earth.

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- God promised Abraham that in him **all the nations – and even families – of the earth** would be blessed.
- He continued the promise to Isaac and then to Jacob.
- To the nation of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, the Messiah, Jesus Christ was born.

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- The promise of blessing is fulfilled in the forgiveness and eternal life available through faith in Jesus Christ.
- When we are in Christ, we are joined together in a way that transcends all our variety of differences.
- Once we belong to Christ, no other detail about us is more important than that.

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- The cross of Christ is all the evidence we need that God desires to bless us as individuals.
- He died for the sins of the world, but those sins are found in unique individuals like us.

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- Just as God dealt with Abraham and promised to bless him in a very personal way, he also wants to bless us.
- That blessing will not look like Abraham's because we are all different people with different needs.
- And just like the blessing to Abraham, God wants to make us channels of blessing that will reach out into the world.

# A Shared Promise      Conclusions

- As a church, let's pray for a supernatural ability to:
  1. See how God wants to bless us as unique individuals.
  2. See how he wants to work in our family, our clan, those people who are closest to us.
  3. Become channels of blessing to our family, our nation and our world.
  4. Share God's heart for the nations and families of the earth that do not yet know Christ and his salvation.

Next Week

# A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ



Part 4 of 14

# Reference List

1. Enns, Paul. 1989, 2008, 2014. *The Moody handbook of theology, revised and expanded*. 25th Anniversary edition. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 37.
2. Ryrie, Charles C. 2005. *The basis of the premillennial faith*. Kindle edition. Dubuque, Iowa: ECS Ministries, locations 689-697.