

Genesis 12:1–7 Blessed By Obedient Faith

In this chapter we learn from Abraham how God calls His people to leave every lesser loyalty, obey Him by faith, and trust that His blessing is better than anything He calls them to leave behind.

Topic- Faith, Obedience, Sacrifice

Topic: Obedient Faith

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Genesis 1–11 = 2,000 years
-Genesis 12-Malachi = 2,000
-2000 years gets 11 chapters
-Abraham gets 14.

BONUS BIBLE-TIMELINE:

-2000BC = Abraham
-1500BC = Moses (Flees to Midian)
-1000BC = David
-500BC = Temple Rebuilt After Babylon

*Boice- "With the exception of Jesus Christ, Abraham is probably the most important person in the Bible."

*Boice- "No one can understand the Old Testament without understanding Abraham."

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ABRAHAM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Shows up 73 times in 71 verses.

Galatians 3–4: 9x

John 8: 9x

Romans 4: 8x

Hebrews 6–7: 7x

Luke 16: 6x

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THE CALL REQUIRES LEAVING (12:1)

The call is both negative and positive. Negative: leave. Positive: go.

What must Abraham leave?

-Every lesser loyalty

- Country
- People
- Father's house.

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The hardest things to leave are not always obviously wicked.
Sometimes they are familiar, respectable, comfortable, expected, cultural, family-approved.

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THE CALL REQUIRES LEAVING (12:1)
Abraham was called to leave his Country

*Ur

*Ur map

PATRIOTISM

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THE CALL REQUIRES LEAVING (12:1)
Abraham was called to leave his Country
Abraham was called to leave his People(Culture)

"Family / kindred" = mōledeṯ (מולדת): kindred, birth, offspring, relatives.
-NIV = "People"

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God's call often exposes competing loyalties.

What has a stronger hold on you than the Word of God?

- Culture?
- Family expectations?
- Patriotism?
- Tradition?
- Old friends?
- A relationship?
- A habit?

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THE CALL REQUIRES LEAVING (12:1)
Abraham was called to leave his Country
Abraham was called to leave his People(Culture)
Abraham was called to leave his Father's House

*Abe's Calling Joke, Leave those who annoy you

It is much easier to obey when God calls us to leave behind things we know are wrong,
-but it's hard when He calls us to leave the things that feel right.

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Joshua 24:2 — And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.

Genesis 31:19 — Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father’s.

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1 Peter 2:9 — But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

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God did not call Abraham to “believe in Canaan” from Ur, He called him to LEAVE Ur and GO to Canaan.

The call of God is not an invitation to add religion to your old life.
It is a command to leave and follow.

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THE CALL REQUIRES FULL OBEDIENCE, BY FAITH (12:4-6)

Abraham is told 6 of 7 blessings in verses 2-3

-We will examine all 7 in verse 7

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Genesis 12:4–6 appears as if he obeyed.

Hebrews 11:8 — By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance...

Faith requires obedience,
& Obedience requires action.

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Genesis 11:31 — And Terah took his son Abraham and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abraham’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.

Acts 7:2–4 — And he said, “Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.”

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WE'VE GOT TWO PROBLEMS:

- 1) Abraham brought his family
- 2) Abraham stopped halfway and got wealthy

Genesis 12:5 — Then Abram took... all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran...

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“Partial Obedience” = Disobedience

“Obey”

-”Right away, all the way, and with a good attitude, every day.”

Ephesians 6:1 — Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

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Partial obedience can feel like progress when you compare it to where you started instead of where God told you to go.

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God calls us to glory,
but many are content to settle for less.

Numbers 32:1&5 — Now the children of Reuben and Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that indeed the region was a place for livestock... they said, “If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us over the Jordan.”

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*Ferguson- "When family and prosperity are given priority over God's Word, halfway obedience becomes the characteristic of our life, and halfway blessing becomes the experience of our pilgrimage."

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*Scroggie "The callings of God never leave a man where they find him. For to stay where he is after God has bidden him to move on is itself a backward movement, though he take no actual step."

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Have you stayed put, while you know God has asked you to go?

Many people turn back or stay put because they expected obedience to feel easier.

Luke 9:23 — “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Luke 9:59–60 — Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:61–62 — And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

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What do you truly want in life???

-Do you want God's future or your past?

What do you truly desire more?

-Amusement or the peace of God? -Entertainment or joy?

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*Ravenhill- "I believe that entertainment is the devil's substitute for joy. The more joy you have in the Lord, the less you need entertainment."

*Elliot- "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Has God asked you to leave something behind, yet you are trying to take it with you?

-Has God called you onward, yet you have remained still?

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THE CALL LEADS TO BLESSING (12:2-3 & 7-8)

Hebrews 11:8 — By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

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God's Seven Promises:

1) I will make you a great nation

2) I will bless you and make your name great 3) and you shall be a blessing.

4) I will bless those who bless you

5) and I will curse him who curses you

6) and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed....

7) To your descendants I will give this land.

The Abrahamic Covenant

*Gods People Israel

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“I will bless you...”

-“and you shall be a blessing...”

Galatians 3:16 — Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. (C.f. Gen 22:18)

Abraham brought Christ to us, through his lineage,
-Now we bring Christ to the world through the Gospel

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And there he built an altar... (7-8)

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What is an altar?

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THE ALTAR SAYS:

-“I am unworthy, but God called me anyway.”

-“God is worthy even before I see it all fulfilled.”

-“I am here because God...”

-“My life is not defined by what I possess, but by what God has promised.”

-“I will praise You, even before I see the promises come.”

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Hebrews 11:9-10 — By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents... for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Luke 18:29–30 — “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

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*Bonhoeffer- "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world."

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Revelation 18:4 — And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

-Matthew 11:28 — “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

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APPENDIX: WILL GOD STILL BLESS THOSE WHO BLESS ISRAEL?

In preparation of teaching Genesis 12 this Sunday, I realized that I would not have sufficient time to address this subject at length, so I decided to write up a short teaching here.

Genesis 12:3 says:

“I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you...”

That promise was originally spoken by God to Abram. The question is: does that promise still apply to Israel today?

Some would say yes.

They would argue that the promise was made to Abram and his physical descendants, and nothing in the text itself says it expires.

God’s covenant with Abraham is repeatedly tied to his seed, the land, and the nation that would come from him.

Genesis 12:2 says:

“I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.”

Genesis 13:15 says:

“for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.”

Genesis 17:7 says:

“And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant...”

Genesis 17:8 says:

“Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land... as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

So the “for” argument says: if the covenant is everlasting, and if the land and nation promises are given to Abraham’s physical offspring, then Genesis 12:3a still has a real-world application to the Jewish people and to Israel.

It is also reinforced by later Scripture where nations are judged by their treatment of Israel.

Joel 3:1–2 says God gathers the nations into judgment because they “scattered My people among the nations” and “divided up My land.”

Zechariah 2:8 says:

“For he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.”

Matthew 25:31–46 is often used by dispensational and futurist interpreters to argue that Gentile nations are judged by how they treated Christ’s “brethren,” commonly understood as believing Jews or Israel during the tribulation.

Romans 11 also matters. Paul still distinguishes Israel from the Gentiles and says:

Romans 11:1:

“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!”

Romans 11:28–29:

“Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

So the strongest “for” argument is this:

God made promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. Israel’s unbelief brought judgment and temporary hardening, but it did not erase God’s covenantal election. Therefore, nations and individuals should still treat Israel with seriousness, humility, and care, because God has not finished His purposes for them.

Others would say no.

They would argue that Genesis 12:3 ultimately points to Christ, not to a permanent blank-check promise attached to every political action of ethnic or national Israel.

Paul explicitly says the Abrahamic promise finds its fulfillment in Christ.

Galatians 3:8 says:

“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’”

Galatians 3:16 says:

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made... ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”

Galatians 3:29 says:

“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

So the “against” argument says: the blessing of Abraham is not finally mediated through modern political Israel, but through Christ. Therefore, Genesis 12:3 should not be used as a simple rule meaning, “Support the modern state of Israel in everything and God will bless you.”

They would also point out that the Old Testament itself never treats Israel as immune from judgment. God judged Israel severely when Israel was wicked.

Amos 3:2 says:

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

Jeremiah 7:9–10 rebukes Israel for thinking they could sin and then hide behind the temple.

So the “against” argument says: even if God has purposes for ethnic Israel, Genesis 12:3 cannot mean unconditional approval of Israel’s behavior. God Himself cursed, judged, exiled, and disciplined Israel when they rebelled.

A stronger covenant-theology version would say: Genesis 12:3 now applies to Christ and His people, Jew and Gentile together. To bless Abraham’s Seed is to receive Christ. To curse Abraham’s Seed is to reject Christ. Therefore, the verse is fulfilled in the gospel, not in a continuing geopolitical principle attached to the modern nation-state.

But in truth, I think the safest and most balanced answer is this:

Genesis 12:3 still matters for Israel, but it should not be used simplistically.

It does not mean:

“Whatever the modern state of Israel does is automatically right.”

It does not mean:

“Christians must support every Israeli policy.”

It does not mean:

“Modern Israel replaces the need for faith in Christ.”

But it does mean:

God has not forgotten Abraham’s physical descendants.

Israel still has covenantal significance in God’s plan.

Hostility toward the Jewish people is spiritually serious.

The nations should fear mistreating the people through whom God brought the patriarchs, the covenants, the Scriptures, and the Messiah.

Paul's balance in Romans 11 is probably the best: Israel is presently hardened in part, still beloved for the sake of the fathers, and still awaiting future mercy.

So yes, I believe Genesis 12:3 still has meaning today.

But it should make us humble, not reckless.

It should make us honor God's covenant faithfulness, not excuse sin or injustice.

And it should remind us that the story of Israel is not finished, because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not finished keeping His Word.