

## PROMISE KEEPER

We are in week 2 of “In The Beginning” as we continue on our journey through the Bible and so far we have seen that God created man and set him in a perfect environment with everything he needed. But as MAN has a tendency to do, he could not leave well enough alone and so MAN sins and now the curse of sin is hanging over him and his offspring for generations to come. That which God made in Genesis 1 and 2 (which was glorious and perfect) has now become corrupted by sin in Genesis 3 and little by little the creation begins to feel the weight of its impact.

In Genesis 4 we have the first murder and the first lie that seeks to cover up that murder where Cain, the first born son of Adam and Eve, kills his brother Abel because he was jealous over the fact that God accepted his brother sacrifice but didn't accept his. Cain, rather than confessing and repenting of his sin, hardens his heart toward God as well as his own family and would rather be separated from God and isolated from his family so that he can go off and make his own way in the world apart from God. **(The attitude we see exhibited by Cain in Genesis 4 is very typical of the attitude of rebellion against God we see in the world today. This is an attitude where one would rather live apart from God than to submit to Him)** In Genesis 6 the wickedness of mankind escalates the further we move away from the Garden in Eden. It gets so bad that here is what God says about the condition of things on the earth, **Genesis 6:5-7 (NIV) 5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.** (Btw, as far as God is concerned there is only ONE RACE, the human race! This idea of different races being distinguished by nationalities and or skin color is a human construct we have created to distinguish certain groups of people, but it is a wrong and inaccurate designation that was never part of God's creation regarding mankind) **6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. 7 So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.”**

But one man found grace in the eyes of God and his name was Noah. Noah was described as a just man who walked with God. So because of his heart for God, a way of escape was provided for Him in light of the pending judgment that God was planning to bring upon the whole earth. This was a period in human history much like the movie THE PURGE where there really are no rules or boundaries governing man's behavior, yet in all of that there is one man who chooses to live rightly. In Genesis 7 God brings judgment on the whole earth by flooding the earth with water. As a way of escape God provided the ark. It is important to note that the ark was available not only for Noah and his family, but for all those who would be willing to repent of their sin and turn back to God. Noah was more than a boat builder. He was a preacher of righteousness as he is referred to in **2 Peter 2:5** where it says, **5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness,.....** Noah's opportunity to preach was while he was building the ark. While

God's judgment was severe, it was not immediate! God gave plenty of time for people to turn from their sin while the ark was being built (It took him anywhere from 75 to 100 years to build according to the Biblical timeline given to us in Genesis) Of course the problem was that people did not have ears to hear and they had hardened their hearts toward God which was the real reason God was bringing judgment upon the earth in the first place. Btw, this is also a sign to us as to how it will be before Jesus comes again. People will not want to hear the Gospel! **Luke 17:26 (NIV)** "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

But as we are going to see throughout the Bible mankind has a sin problem. God can extend us grace, offer us a chance to repent and even spare us from pending judgment, but left to ourselves we will sin again and rebel against God and choose to do things our own way.

After, the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 (btw, language really is the only thing that makes a distinction between different nations and peoples) God begins to reveal more of His plan for redeeming the world from the curse of sin when He identifies for us the nation by which He plans to bring the promised one who will crush the serpent Satan's head. Here again is the promise God made to Adam and Eve.

**Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He ( the one who will come from woman - JESUS) will crush your head, and you (SATAN the one who used the serpent to deceive Adam and Eve) will strike his heel."

Today we are going to be introduced to Abram the father of the nation of Israel and we are going to see that it is through Israel that God is going to bring the promised one of Genesis 3:15.

**While you are finding Genesis 12 let me pray for us.**

Before we read our text, let me give you a brief background regarding Abram's name. Abram as we are introduced to him here in Genesis 12 is also better known as Abraham. When we meet Abram he and his wife Sarai are childless. As a result of calling Abram out from the land of Haran, God is going to bless Abram and make him into a great nation. Of course as we will see, that nation is going to be none other than the nation of Israel. In Genesis 17, as a sign of His covenant promise with Abram, God is going to change Abram's name to **Abraham which means in Hebrew "father of many"**. You see Abraham is not only a father to the nation of Israel, but in a real sense He is a spiritual father to all of us who come to God by FAITH in Christ. Paul eludes to this fact in his letter to the Galatians.

**Galatians 3:6-9 & 14 (NIV)** **6** So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." **7** Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. **8** Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles (This is you and I) by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." **9** So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith..... **14** 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.

In fact, it is Abram's FAITH exhibited here in Genesis 12 and again in Genesis 22 that is a model for all of us to follow as we seek after God in our lives. And it is this FAITH that God is going to use to enable mankind to be reconciled to God. Now with that as our context let's read our passage for today.

### **Genesis 12:1-3 (NIV)**

**1** The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. **2** "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

For some of us, we will never fulfill the true calling on our lives because we will never leave our family. Some of you, are missing out on what God has for you because you listen to your family more than God. One day, you will stand before God, not your mama, daddy or grandparents... it's okay to learn from them, but you are to be obedient to God above all else. When it comes to a relationship with God there is one key element we must have and we see it in the Garden in Genesis 3 and we see it again here in Genesis 12. What is that key element? It is the element of **FAITH! Faith simply stated is the ABILITY to TRUST God.**

**Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

**Romans 14:23 (NIV)** .....everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Adam and Eve's failure in the Garden was the result of a lack of faith and it ended up hindering theirs as well as mankind's relationship with God. Their lack of faith became sin that placed a barrier between them and God. That is what a failure to walk by faith does. It causes you to do the opposite of what God would have you do. And here in Genesis 12 as God is calling Abram out to be a part of the solution to fix mankind's relationship problem with God, once again FAITH is the key component.

But here is the beautiful part about FAITH that I want us to see this morning. When God calls us to FAITH it isn't a blind step out into nothing like most people seem to think. No! There is much more to it than that. It would be one thing if God shows up and says, "Abram I want you to come with me to a land I will show you. So, resign your position with your dad's business. Put your house on the market. Pack up the wife and kids. And the shuttle to the airport will be here to pick you up in the morning." But God does not do that! God knows we have a faith problem that we have inherited from our father Adam and our mother Eve. So God helps us out a little. Now, make no mistake. FAITH is still required! No way around it! **Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)** defines faith this way, **Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.** We don't get tangible evidence, but God does give us something to hold onto. God is going to provide us with two vital resources to help us exercise our FAITH. And we see both of these resources in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15 respectively.

The first vital resource is **God gives us His PROMISES!** Look back at verse 2 and notice all that God promises Abram if he would step out with Him in FAITH.

- 1) He promises to make him (his offspring) a great nation
- 2) He promises to make his name great and to bless him with God's favor
- 3) He promises him he will be a blessing to others and that God will protect him by blessing those who bless him and cursing those who curse him
- 4) He promises to bless all nations and peoples of the world through him (Btw, we who believe in Jesus today are able to do so because Abram stepped out in faith. The blessing being referred to here is the blessing of salvation that would be given to all who would believe in Jesus. This is what Paul was talking about in Galatians 3:14)

**14 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.**

God gives Abram promises to cling to. Now for those of us who have our lives filled with broken promises that might not excite you very much but let me remind you of who this God is that is making and backing up these promises.

#### **He is the God who never lies**

**John 8:26 (NIV)** "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."

#### **He is the God who is always faithful**

**2 Timothy 2:13 (NIV)** if we are faithless, he (GOD) remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.

**He is the God who always comes through just as He has promised 2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV)** For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. (**Amen** means "so be it" or "let it be so")

**He is the God who never changes Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

His promises are fully backed by all of the resources of heaven and they can be trusted! Any time God calls us to a step of faith with Him it always comes with promises. These promises serve as our REALITY being hoped for or as our PROOF of that which we have not yet seen. But I want you to notice that these promises cannot be fully unleashed until we trust God enough to step out in FAITH. **Faith is the gateway that unleashes the promises of God in our lives**

As it is with any journey of faith we will be tested. The circumstances that swirl around us will create a crisis of belief. In those moments will we continue to trust God or will we lean on our own understanding and take matters into our own hands? In these moments we cannot lose

sight of the promises. If we do, we will give into our own desires and try to solve matters on our own. And unfortunately, this is exactly what happens to Abram.

Soon after arriving in the promised land he takes his eyes off of God and becomes consumed with his current circumstances. **How many are guilty of this? We know the promises, but yet our circumstances outweigh what God has spoken.** In the land of promise is a famine so he takes a detour to Egypt looking for provisions for his situation. (It is here that Abram should have leaned into the promises God gave him for assurance that everything is going to be alright! What were they again? **1) I will make you a great nation, 2) I will make your name great and I will bless you, 3) You will be a blessing to others and I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, 4) I will bless all nations and peoples of the world through you** Kind of hard to do that if you die of famine in the land of promise or die in the hands of Pharaoh? **God's got you! The question is, Do you trust the promises?**

While in Egypt his wife is taken into Pharaoh's harem because he felt led to lie about her being his sister out of fear of what Pharaoh might do to him if he found out she was his wife. Again, this would be a great opportunity to lean on the promises! But what does Abram do? He lies, taking matters into his own hands and forgetting the promises God had given him.

After difficulty comes to Pharaoh's house, Pharaoh figures out he is being cursed because of Abram so he asks them to leave. Upon returning back to the promised land, and after some difficulties with his nephew Lot and a run in with some kings in the land, God comes to Abram and reminds him of the second vital resource we have when it comes to FAITH, **God gives us His PROVISIONS.**

### **Genesis 15:1-11 (NIV)**

**1** After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." **2** But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." **4** Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." **5** He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." **6** Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. **7** He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." **8** But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" **9** So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." **10** Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. **11** Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

Notice what God says to Abram first! "DO NOT BE AFRAID!" Beware of FEAR! FEAR robs us of FAITH and will often cause us to lose sight of the promises. It will also cause us to forget that

God is our provider. Not only for daily necessities in life, but also along the entire journey of FAITH. Notice how God handles Abram's wavering faith. First,

**1) He reminds him that He is a SHIELD of Protection.** He protected Him on the journey to the promised land. He protected him from Pharaoh in Egypt even when he went there as a lack of faith. He protected him from the band of kings in Genesis 14. He will continue to protect and provide for Him until His promise is fulfilled. After all, it is part of the promises. **Genesis 12:3** I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;

**Psalm 28:7 (NIV)**

The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.  
My heart leaps for joy,  
and with my song I praise him.

**Where are you at today?** What are your current circumstances? **GOD IS YOUR SHIELD!** Will you let Him be? He is your **STRENGTH!** Will you let Him provide what you and I lack? **Praise Him CHURCH for HE is ready and willing to be an ever present help!** Secondly,

**2) He reminds him that He has UNLIMITED Power**

- He clarifies that his offspring will be his own flesh and blood by showing him the stars in the sky that God placed there. If God can do that with the stars, what is it for Him to do that with Abram's offspring.

**Jeremiah 32:27** "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

**Luke 1:37 (ESV)** For nothing will be impossible with God."

Notice Abram's belief was counted as righteousness. Righteousness can only come by faith. **Philippians 3:8-9 (ESV) 8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. We will see this again next week. Lastly,

**3) He reminds him that His WORD is Unfailing**

- He makes a covenant agreement with him that his descendants will inherit the land promised. The sign of ancient covenants often involved the cutting in half of an animal so that the pledging parties could walk between them as a sign affirming that the same should happen to them if they break the covenant being promised. In other words, I should die if my promise is broken.
- God never breaks HIS WORD! HIS WORD IS A SURE PROMISE!

**1 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV)** For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

The only way to have a relationship with God is through FAITH. But God gives us two vital resources to help us take that step. He gives us **His PROMISES** to hold onto and He gives us **His PROVISIONS** for the journey.

### **Worship Team Comes Back Up**

#### **Invitation:**

**How many of us try to manipulate our circumstances for a certain outcome?** Btw, this is not walking by faith! **This is - 2 Corinth 5:7 (NIV) For we live by faith, not by sight.**

**What does Faith look like for you?** Are you trusting in His promises? Have you forgotten His provisions and the times when He has provided for you in the past?

#### **Which promise do you need to cling to today?**

- Are you struggling with temptation? God promises to not allow any temptation for which He doesn't give you a way of escape! **1 Corinth. 10:13**
- Are you struggling with your current situation? In everything God works for your good if you are in Christ! **Romans 8:28**
- Are you fearful? God did not give you a spirit of fear, but of love, power and a disciplined mind! **2 Timothy 1:7**
- Do you feel hopeless? God is your SAVIOR and in Him you have a living HOPE! **Psalms 42:5 & 1 Peter 1:3**
- Are you overwhelmed by life? Come to Him and He will give you rest! **Matthew 11:28**

**Will you take a step of FAITH and trust Him today?** There is not an anxiety, fear, or sin that He does not offer us a promise to cling to! Will you seek His face in His word? Will you trust your life into His care?

**This Week's Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:6 & 11:8-10**

**This Week's Reading:**

**Job 38-39**

**Job 40-42**

**Genesis 11-12**

**Genesis 15**

**Genesis 16-17**