

PANDEMIC

"HOPE AIRBORNE THROUGH HISTORY"

GENESIS 12:1-9

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Faith – I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes. Ephesians 6:19, 20 *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

Jesus' Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20) is the New Testament expression of God's long-standing intention to bless the whole world by providing a solution to the problem of sin that resulted from the fall (Ge 3:15). In other words, the salvific mission of the Church is rooted in the Old Testament. When God called Abram, he made it clear that his promise to bless him *personally* and his *posterity* entailed a promise to bless "all peoples on earth" through him (Ge 12:3). One commentator writes: "The promises that this glorious God gave to Abram fall into three categories (Gen. 12:2-3). First there were personal promises given to Abram. God said, 'I will bless you; I will make your name great.' Then there were national promises given to this childless man. 'I will make you into a great nation.' And finally there were universal promises that were to come through Abram. 'You will be a blessing . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you' (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 51-52).

God revealed later that his promise to bless humanity would come not directly *from* Abraham but *through* his "offspring" (Ge 22:18; 26:4; 28:14), and

The task of Jesus continues in his commissioned servants.

– Darrell L. Bock

still later, through one individual descendant of Abraham, the royal son of David (Ps 72:17). Of course, the New Testament clarifies the identity of this king. According to Peter and Paul, Jesus is the royal descendant of Abraham and David who fulfills God's promise to bless the world. Referring to the resurrected Jesus, Peter told his contemporaries, "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'" (Ac 3:25), and referring to the crucified Jesus, Paul told the Galatians, "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (Gal 3:8).

In Old Testament times, God intended for his covenant people, Israel, to be a missional nation. The Mosaic covenant transformed those delivered from Egyptian slavery into a priestly people. According to one commentator: "The metaphor likens Israel's relationship to the world to that of a priest who serves society and mediates God's blessing by being set apart to him. 'All Israel is a priesthood by virtue of its obedience to God's covenant.' By their obedience they represent *I AM* to the nations and become the means of bringing the nations to turn to and trust *I AM* who teaches and protects them (cf. Deut. 4:5-8; Isa. 42:1-4; 44:3-5; 45:22; 49:6; 51:4-5). They mediate God's blessings to others according to the divine intention for Abraham and his seed to be a missional nation from the beginning (Gen. 12:3)" (Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 407). Unfortunately, the nation failed miserably, like Jonah, to live up to God's intention for it.

In New Testament times, he likewise intends for the Church to be a missional people. Continuity between the Old and New Testaments on this matter is implicit in Paul's quotation of Isaiah 49:6—"the great is con't pg. 2

commission of the Old Testament" (Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, NTC, 495)—in Acts 13:47. When certain synagogue Jews in Antioch "talked abusively" against what Paul was saying regarding God's "Holy One," Jesus (v. 35), he and Barnabas boldly told them, "We had to speak the word of God to you [Jews] first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has *commanded us*." And then they justified their decision to turn to the Gentiles by quoting Isaiah 49:6: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." They applied to themselves words spoken by the LORD through his prophet about his Servant (Isa 49:3, 5, 6; cf., 42:1-7; 44:1-2, 8, 21; 45:4; 48:20), identified as "both the nation (e.g., Isa 41:8; 44:1) and the One who is to come who would minister to Israel (e.g., Isa. 53)" (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 13 [Jan-Mar 1996]: 5-6).

On the apostle's use of the Old Testament, one commentator explains: "The servant was normally an image tied to Jesus in the NT. Now they are the light. They bring salvation to the 'end of the earth' (cf., Luke 3:6). So Paul and Barnabas are now seen as an extension of the work of the Servant of the Lord, who was Jesus . . . The task of Jesus continues in his commissioned servants. Their call is to be a light to the Gentiles and go to the end of the earth. This verse echoes Acts 1:8, which alludes to Isa. 49:6 as well. The goal of God's plan of salvation is to take the message to the end of the earth, to extend it to all nations in every part of the world" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 464). We are all commissioned to give away our faith.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

11:27 *This is the account of Terah.*

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. 28 While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. 29 Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. 30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no children.

31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.

32 Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

Genesis 12:1-9

1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go 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."

4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. 9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "had said" in v. 1.
- * Circle "go" in v. 1.
- * Highlight "I will" in vv. 2, 3.
- * Highlight "bless/ing/ed" in vv. 2, 3 in a different color.
- * Circle "you will be" in v. 2.
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in vv. 4, 7.

- * Box "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 4.
- * Underline "people they had acquired" in v. 5.
- * Circle "Canaanites" in v. 6.
- * Circle "appeared" in v. 7.
- * Bracket "built an altar" in vv. 7, 8.
- * Circle "called on" in v. 8.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Read Acts 7:2, 3 (cf. Ge 12:1). According to Stephen's testimony, God appeared to Abraham—not his father, Terah—while the patriarch was still in Mesopotamia before he lived in Haran, but Genesis 11:31 indicates that Terah took his son, grandson, and daughter-in-law out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. Who then do you think made the decision to leave Ur? Explain.
2. Verse 1 records God's command to Abram; verses 2 and 3 record his promises to him. What is the implied relationship between God's commandment and his promises?
3. The word "bless" is a familiar term in the Bible. What does it mean—how do you understand it?
4. In what ways did God promise to bless Abram?
5. Has God fulfilled his promises to Abram—what do you think?
6. Explain the relationship of the paragraph beginning in verse 4 to the previous one.
7. Explain the significance of the *comparison* in verse 4.
8. What can we infer about Abram's spiritual condition from verse 4? (See Heb 11:8; cf. Ge 15:6)
9. Abram found Canaanites in the land when he arrived there. So what?
10. Abram built an altar in the vicinity of Bethel where he "called on the name of the LORD" (v. 8). The same expression occurs in Genesis 4:26 ("began to call on") referring to Enosh and others in the line of Seth but with no mention of an altar. What exactly did the Sethites do (see "Or to proclaim," NIV margin) and what does that suggest Abram did?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

About this passage, in general, one author writes, "Within the book of Genesis no section is more significant than 11:27-12:9 . . . Abraham's obedience to the divine call, forsaking his home-land and family for the worship of the LORD in the land of promise, stands as an example and an incentive to all his descendants to follow suit. This will bring blessing on themselves and to the whole world" (Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1, Genesis 1-15*, 281). On the point of 12:1-9, in particular, another writes, "The passage provides a paradigm of the obedience of faith. It shows a faith that left everything and obeyed the word of the Lord; but it also portrays a believer who proclaimed his faith. The narrative develops these ideas nicely in two cycles: the Word of the Lord and Abram's response to it [vv. 1-6], and then the appearance of the Lord and Abrams's response to it [vv. 7-9]" (Allan P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 262).

In the first cycle, God called Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia and promised to bless him in three ways provided he obeyed the command, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you" (ESV). One writer categorizes these promises this way. "First there were *personal* promises given to Abram. God said, 'I will bless you; I will make your name great.' Then there were *national* promises given to this childless man. 'I will make you into a great nation.' And finally there were *universal* promises that were to come through Abram. 'You will be a blessing . . . and all people on earth will be blessed through you' (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy kingdom Come*, 52). Abram clearly believed God's promise because he went "as the LORD had told him." Hebrews leaves no doubt about it, "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" (11:9). Moreover, Romans declares that Abraham was justified by faith (4:3).

On whether people are justified, i.e., deemed righteous by God, by faith or doing good works, Paul writes in Romans 4:1-5 "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" Then Paul goes on to explain. "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, the man who does not work but

trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness." In other words, God credited Abraham's faith in the promise God made to him while he was still in Mesopotamia as righteousness before he had done any good works to merit it. Paul puts it this way. "We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them" (Rom. 4:10, 11).

Abraham's experience flies in the face of world religions and contemporary spiritualities that teach one day everybody will stand before God, who will then judge each person one by one and reward everyone who has done more good than bad in heaven and punish everyone who has done more bad than good in hell. Abraham was declared righteous because he believed God, not because his good works outweighed his bad. This means that people aren't on the road to heaven because they are decent, sincere people who try to live by the Golden Rule or faithfully adhere to the tenets of a particular religion, or any such thing. People are on the road to heaven because they have faith in God's promise to save those who trust in Jesus Christ.

When Abram left Haran, Sarai and Lot went with him along with "the people they had acquired" there (v. 5). "This expression probably does not refer to the acquisition of slaves, for the Hebrew word *nepes* would not likely be used for that. And it certainly does not refer to their children, because Sarai was barren until Isaac's birth (21:1-7). Cassuto argues that this expression probably refers to proselytes (*ibid.*, p 320). If he is correct, then the narrative implies that, already in Haran, Abram had been sharing his faith in the Lord" (Ross, 265). When he arrived in Canaan, the land was occupied. Canaanite antagonists were there, which explains why he did not immediately inherit the land.

In the second cycle God appeared to Abram to confirm the promise he had made to him (vv. 7-9). At first, the LORD spoke to Abram; then he appeared to him. Their relationship was growing more intimate. Abram responded by building an altar to the LORD and by worshipping. As he headed south to survey the land God promised him, he pitched his

tent in Bethel, built an altar there, too, and "called on the name of the LORD." This expression probably refers to something other than prayer. Luther translated the Hebrew verb "preached" (*predigte* in German) suggesting that in worship Abraham *proclaimed* the name of the Lord (i.e., his attributes

and actions). "The Lord promised to make Abram's *name* great, to make him famous, and Abram responded by proclaiming the *name* of the Lord—making the Lord famous in Canaan, as it were" (Ross, 267).

The Message of the Passage

Those who believe and are made righteous like Abraham respond by worshipping God and partnering with him to bring his promised blessings to the world.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

11:27 *the account of* This Hebrew term occurs repeatedly throughout Genesis—each time marking the beginning of a new section of the book (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2). As the heading of each new section, it introduces what became of or what happened following the ancestor mentioned. Therefore, the account of Terah is not actually about Terah; it is really about who proceeded from Terah, namely, Abraham and his kin. "It is the father of the principal hero of the succeeding tales who gives his name to the family history" (Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Genesis 1-15*, 256).

v. 32 **205 years** If Abram was born when Terah was 70 (11:26), and was 75 when he left Haran (12:4), then Terah must have been 145 when Abram left and must have lived another 60 years in Haran before he died since he lived 205 years (11:32). But Ac 7:4 indicates Abram left Haran after Terah died. Perhaps Terah's son, Haran, was the oldest, seeing he died first (11:28) and Abram was born much later, or perhaps Stephen was following the Samaritan Pentateuch of Ge 11:32, which indicates Terah lived 145 years (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 190).

12:1 **leave** Lit., "go for yourself." Abram is to disassociate himself from his familiar surroundings to discover his new identity in a new place. Hence the translation "Go by yourself from your country . . ." (Wenham, 266). "Go, you by yourself, or only with those who are united to you in unique relationship, go on the way that belongs to you alone, and leave behind your kinsfolk amongst whom you have lived till now and who do not wish or are not able to associate themselves with you in your new way" (U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part II From Noah to Abraham*, 311).

v. 1 **had said** God spoke these words to Abraham when he was in Ur, not Haran.

v. 2 **great nation** "A 'nation' is a political unit with a common land, language, and government . . . A large population, a large territory, and a spiritual character make a nation great (cf. 12:7; 13:14-17, etc.; Deut 4:7-8)" (Wenham, 275).

v. 3 **bless** "The concept of blessing signifies the bestowal of all good, protection from all evil (in the priestly benediction, Num. vi 24: *The Lord bless you and KEEP YOU*), the granting of grace (*ibid.* v. 25: *and be GRACIOUS to you*), and enduring happiness and peace (*ibid.* v. 26: *and give you PEACE*). No ordinary life shall be vouchsafed to you and to your descendants, but life that is blessed of the Lord" (Cassuto, 313).

v. 2 **name great** Cf., 2Sam 7:9.

v. 2 **will be a blessing** The NIV makes this sound like a prediction but in fact, the verb retains the force of an imperative. Cf., "you shall be a blessing" (NKJV). "If Abram would get out of Ur, God would do three things for him, so that he could then be a blessing in the land (the second imperative); and he had to be that blessing so that God would do three more things for him. This symmetry should not be missed, for it strengthens the meaning. Abram's calling had a purpose: his obedience would bring great blessing" (Allan P. Ross, "Genesis," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 47). The expression "will be a blessing" occurs in only two other passages (Isa 19:24; Zech 8:13), and its precise interpretation is uncertain. It's usually read with the sense that because Abram has been blessed, "he will be a source of blessing to others." But some suggest it should be read with the sense, "May God make you blessed like Abram" using the patriarch's name in a blessing (Wenham, 276; Cassuto, 314).

v. 3 **will be blessed** Blessings come through Abraham (cf. v. 2) but their ultimate source is God. One translation makes this clear, "And through you I will bless all the nations" (TEV).

v. 4 **left** The Hebrew verb in verse 4 corresponds to the primary verb of Abraham's call in verse 1. This correspondence is reflected in the NIV. The Lord commanded Abraham to "leave" and he "left."

v. 4 **Lot** Abram may have viewed Lot as his heir.

v. 6 **traveled** Cf., Jos 24:3. "Abram entered the land of Canaan via the northern border and journeyed southward, at first as far as the place of Shechem, subsequently further south to the district of Bethel, and finally further south still, to the Negeb" (Cassuto, 322, 23)

v. 6 **great tree of Moreh** Mention of this tree casts an ominous shadow over the narrative since it refers to a place associated with idol worship (see Hos. 4:13). Moreover, Canaanites were in the land. Abraham found himself in alien territory among people who worshipped local deities.

v. 6 **Shechem** Located in the central part of the land.

v. 8 **Bethel** An important biblical site just north of Jerusalem.

v. 8 **called on the name** Perhaps means more than Abraham *worshipped the Lord* (cf. Ge 4:26, "Or to proclaim," NIV margin).

v. 9 **Negev** A dry wasteland south of Beersheba and the Dead Sea.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

If I have said once, I have said a billion times to my kids - "Obedience brings blessing!" A close second is "Delayed obedience is disobedience." If they are reading this they are cringing! However, our text this week is a beautiful demonstration of the truth in these words. When God called Abram, he said "yes" without hesitation. He simply obeyed. It may have been simple to say "yes" but to actually do it was another thing. At 75 years old, Abram gathered his wife, his nephew and all the people that belonged to him. They packed up all of their earthly possessions and began a journey to an unknown destination. What a sight it must have been! They were no doubt traveling with many children and animals and for those of you who have done a road trip with small kids and a dog, you know the chaos that can ensue. Yet, along the way Abram stopped and built an altar to the Lord. He stayed focused on obedience and worship. My family and your family are on a journey of obedience to the Father. He has asked us to step out and be His hands and feet and heart in this world. Our kids are watching to see if we will say "yes" to God. And once we do, they are watching to see how we obey—immediately, worshipfully, joyfully? I'm praying for you as you say "yes" to whatever He asks this year.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Genesis 12:1-9

1. What did God ask Abram to do?
2. How did Abram respond?
3. What did Abram do when he stopped and pitched his tent?

What Do You Think

1. How do you think Abram felt when God called him to go? How would you have felt?
2. What do you think God meant when He said "all people will be blessed through you"?

What R U Going To Do

Sometimes it's hard to obey immediately and joyfully when we are asked to do things we may not want to do. This week, make it a point to do so at home and at school. Write down what happened. Be ready to share with your small group next Sunday.

Core Comp

Giving Away My Faith - I tell others about Jesus to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Matthew 28:18 - *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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