

Promises Made, Promises Kept
Genesis 11:27-12:9
March 1, 2026

Please open your Bibles today to Genesis 11. For about a month now, we've been in the first couple chapters of Genesis which we've said before is the seed plot of whole the Bible. And really of all world history. It tells us where we've come from, why we are here, why things are like they are and how much God loves us. It prophesies the coming of a future Messiah to save us from Adam sin. Last week, we looked at the skyscraper that wasn't, the Tower of Babel and where all the different languages and skin colors came from. If you missed any of those messages, go back and get caught up so that the Bible and the world around you makes a lot more sense. The rest of Genesis 11 is ancestry.com material. It tells us of Shem's descendants down several generations.

And these descendants lead us to another Biblical personality. So far, we've talked about Adam and Eve, Noah, and last week a bit about Nimrod as well as a few others in passing. But this week, we zero in on one individual who, if we understand God's work in His life, will help us understand God's work in our own life. To introduce this person, please stand if you are able as we read from Gen 11:27-12:5 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.

Say Ur. What we say when frustrated. Quoting the Bible. The Bible is a real book about real people who lived in real places in real time. It's not a fairytale about a long time ago in a land far away. Terah and his family lived in the city of Ur which archaeologists have discovered here, just south of Babylon. In fact, Ur had its own ziggurat, or tower, as we discovered last week. Terah and his family lived there. He had three sons, one of whom died. His other two sons both married and settled down in Ur until their dad decided to move. In Acts 7:(2-3), Stephen tells us that, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 3 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.'" So even though Gen 11 tells us Terah moved his family, it was God who told

Abram to move. This was likely due to the very pagan influence that had flowed downstream from Babylon and had become overwhelming.

The move to Haran was a move of about 600 miles north before there was North American Van lines or UHaul. There was Camelhaul. As we've said before, we tend to think of folks who lived so long ago as inferior to us. We are so much smarter and more advanced. CS Lewis called that chronological snobbery. Although they did not yet have internal combustion engines, they had intelligence and ingenuity that surpasses our own. And they did many things, including long distance travel, that might have taken longer, but was efficient nonetheless.

So they settled into Haran, which was the name of Abram's deceased brother. However, in Hebrew, they are two different words. The word for this city we think meant crossroads and that's very logical based on its location. The site still exists in eastern Turkey and with about 96,000 people still living in the area near the ruins of the very old city from 1900 BC or nearly 4000 years ago.

We also learn from these few verses that Abram's wife is Sarai and that they have no children. That gets us to one of the most important chapters in all the Bible, Gen 12. Follow along. 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.

We don't know how long they lived in Haran, but at some point, God called Abram to move to another place He would show him. Let me put this as clearly as I can. God told Abram, "Pack up everything you have, go to the airport, and I'll tell you what plane to get on. Leave your people, leave your father's family, leave it all behind and trust me." How many of us would do that? We not only need to know what plane, but which seat. God didn't give him a destination to punch into his GPS. He just said trust me. "Your destination and your future depend on your relationship with me. Trust me!" And Abram did. And it paid off for him and for us in enormous and eternal ways as we will see.

Before we look at some of those ways, let's look at what God promised Abram. Say Covenant. This is the Abrahamic Covenant. A covenant is an agreement not based on a contract or law, but on a relationship. Because of the love God had for Abram, and for us, He made these promises. Let's work our way through them.

1. I will make you into a great nation. Say great nation. At this time, most nations had already been born, or so it seemed. Abram would become one however, and not just any nation, but God said a great nation. Oh, and remember, he has no children.

2. I will bless you. What does that mean? Many of you know what that means for God has blessed you too! It is God's favor. God's care and provision, not just enough to get by, but more than enough. Enough to enjoy **and** enough to share. Abundance. There's nothing better than God's blessing on your life and many of you know it!

3. I will make your name great. Say fame. The people at Babel tried to make that happen for themselves and failed miserably. Abram wasn't seeking it but God said He'd give it to him!

4. I will make you a blessing. Not only will Abram be blessed, He will bless and show favor to others. Others will be thankful for him and his life and influence.

5. I will bless those who bless you. That's pretty straightforward. If you do good to Abram, God will in turn do good to you.

6. And the reverse, whoever curses you I will curse. Which end of this do you want to be on? To be blessed by God or cursed by God? It all depends on how you treat Abram! If you try to harm Abram, God will harm you.

And 7. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Say all peoples. Whoa! How's that for scope? Not just a blessing to your family or your neighbors, but all peoples on earth, everywhere through all history.

What a set of promises! Fame, wealth, legacy, protection, provision, influence, etc. Any one of these would be great individually, but you put them all together and who could ask for anything more? We'll talk more a little later about if and how these things have happened and are happening, but first, let's notice Abram's obedience. When God told him to move, it doesn't sound like he stopped to argue or bargain with God. He'll do that in Chapter 18 but right now, vs 4 says, "So Abram left, as the Lord had told him." For the second time in his life, they loaded up the truck and they moved to Beverly. No. They moved to Caanan. Only they didn't know that's where they were going when they left.

And he's no spring chicken. He's 75. Now people were still living longer than today but not nearly as long as before the flood. The aging genes likely mutated for the worse and here we are. Altogether Abraham lived 175 years so this is like middle age for him. Pick up, move, start over. And the hardest part, "Where are you taking me God?"

Where are we going?” God said, “The place I will show you.” As we’ve mentioned in the Experiencing God class, go as far as you can see and then you can see farther. Very rarely does God ever show us the full map, the finish line at the beginning. But as we trust and follow Him step by step, He makes each step clear. Like the blazes on a forest trail. Just follow to the next blaze and when you get there, then you’ll see the next one. And Abram was willing to trust God.

This took faith! Say faith. Abram, later Abraham, becomes the father of faith, the father of the **faithful**. He believed and trusted God enough to obey Him even when he didn’t have all the details. We said last week he may have spent several years with Noah and if so, Noah no doubt drilled this into him. If God could flood the whole world and protect 8 people and all the animals for a whole year, He can do anything else He wants to do. And He can. How Great Thou Art! Say He’s able. God is able to do all of these He promised to Abram. But #2, He’s also faithful to do them! Heb 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. God will keep His end of the covenant. He always has, and always will. We’re used to people promising and then not delivering. Sometimes it’s because they aren’t faithful and other times, it’s because they aren’t able. They overpromise and underdeliver. But God is not only able to do all that He says, He’s also faithful to do all that He says.

We may think it was easier for Abram than for us. It wasn’t. He likely had his farming business well established in Haran, had regular customers and suppliers. All His family was there. He probably had a house, or at least a permanent tent. And new neighbors weren’t always nice. You might very well get killed entering someone else’s land. What you gonna do? Even though Abram didn’t have the NT, nor any of the Old, He believed the truth of 2 Thess 3:3, “But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

So God leads him step by step to Canaan, modern day Israel, which is another 500 miles. 1100 miles total. And Vs 6 and following tells us where he came to. 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." When Abram got to Shechem, deep inside Canaan, God appeared and promised the land to his descendants. Thus, the Promised Land. Today, Shechem is inside the occupied West Bank. Palestinians live there and it isn’t even safe for Jews or Americans to go there. It’s near where we’ve been talking about the woman at the well. But God’s promise was not just for that single plot of ground, it was for the whole country, which they eventually possessed under David and Solomon and later in 1948, when Israel was reborn. Even the occupied West Bank is still Israeli territory just as Gaza was and still is.

Now let's go back and see if God kept His promises to Abram. 1. God promised to make him into a great nation. You know Abram's grandson was Jacob who God renamed Israel and today there are over 7 million Jews in Israel, which is one of the strongest countries in the Middle East. There are over 15 million Jews in the world, not to mention Christians who have been grafted into Abraham's faith family. Besides Israel, however, there are 22 Arab nations with 350 million people which also descended from Abram's other sons. The Abraham Accords seek to bring peace among all of Abraham's family. Promise made, promise kept.

2. I will bless you. Indeed He did. Gen 13:2 tells us, "Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold." And God blessed him with a long life. Promise made, promise kept. Today, his descendants in Israel have the highest standard of living in the Middle East and one of the longest life expectancies in the world, well above the U.S. Israel's \$350 billion economy is larger than all of its immediate neighbors combined. Promise still kept.

3. God promised to make his name great. Abraham is one of the most famous people in world history. More people know his name than those of the Olympic stars, than US presidents, than Chinese leaders. US Presidents were named after him. His name appears no less than 290 times in the Bible and a whole chapter in the Islamic Koran is named after him. Promise made, promise kept and still kept.

4. God promised to make him a blessing and indeed he was a blessing to those around him. Still today, Abraham is a blessing to the world in that many modern advances and inventions that we enjoy every day have all come from Israel, like the cell phone, voice mail, and many health care advances, including a repellent for jellyfish. Israel's leading exports include electronics, medical equipment, software, computer systems, pharmaceuticals, fruits, chemicals, military technology, and diamonds. Even though Jews make up less than .2% of the world's population, 22% of Nobel Prize winners have been Jewish for their contributions to our world. Promise made, promise kept and still kept! Oh, and they know how to score winning goals in the gold medal hockey games.

5 and 6 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. If you study world history, as we did in our morning Bible Study, you will find that as long as nations support Israel and the Jewish people, they prosper and thrive. The US, India, formerly Great Britain and others. But when they abandon and turn their backs on Israel, they suffer and decline. Look at Germany, now Great Britain, Iran, etc. I pray the US always supports Israel. Promises made, promises kept and promises still kept.

7. I will bless all nations through you. And this is the greatest promise of all. How could one man bless the whole world? You already know the answer. It came through Abraham's greatest grandson, a Jew by the name of Jesus. Gal 3:14 says, "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.” From this point on, The OT is primarily all about Abram’s descendants, the Israelites, through whom God will keep the promise He made to Eve in Gen 3:15. Even through the first 4 books of the NT, that is true. But in the 2nd chapter of the Book of Acts and following, we see how God keeps this last promise of blessing the whole world through Abraham’s descendant. He kept all of the other promises to deliver this one to you and to me as Gentiles. Promise made, promise kept and promises still kept.

God keeps His promises. He has promised to leave or forsake you. He’s promised to save completely those who come to Him. He’s promised to forgive entirely. And He keeps His promises.

But Abram had to trust. He had to believe. He had to leave. He had to act. Faith is more than just saying in your heart or mind, “I believe Jesus died for me. I accept Him as my Savior.” It’s accepting Him as our Lord and trusting Him enough to do what He says. What He says in His Word-whether we like it or not- and what He says to us through His Holy Spirit. Not always, but sometimes God calls us, like Abram, to leave the familiar, the secure to follow Him into the unknown. Do we have the faith of Abram to follow Him without knowing exactly where He is leading? Sharon shared this morning how she sensed God calling her to leave the secure and familiar to be more faithful to Him. It was a step of faith. She took it and God has blessed her and is blessing others through her, myself and CBC included. I felt God calling me to leave 17 years of teaching which was a solid and secure career to enter fulltime ministry which is anything but solid and secure. And God has blessed me and hopefully people have been blessed through me. Don’t step out on your own whim, without God leading. But if God is leading, follow Him!

Finally today, we can’t claim all of Abe’s promises for ourselves, but the last one we surely can! As we tell other people about Abraham’s greatest grandson, Jesus, they will be blessed eternally through Him! And the more people we tell about Jesus, the more people will be blessed through us. If you haven’t received Him as your Savior, recognize Him as the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abram 4000 years ago that is still blessing people today, and if you have, be sure He is your Lord and share Him with others.