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Abraham and the Promise!

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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Genesis 12:2-3

Genesis 12, key verse 12:1-3

Timeline, about 2000 BC. During Abraham's life, the areas were ruled by Egypt and the Pharaohs, the Sphinx and great Pyramids are built, and the Bronze Age is in high gear.

Key personalities: God, Abram (Abraham), Sarai (Sarah), and a Promised Land.

God continues to work through the mess with a new plan for humanity!

A recap: Adam and Eve were driven out of paradise never to return; now, we see the early struggle of humanity. We see the evil line of Cain building monuments to themselves and pride, hating God in great contrast to the new son, Seth, who seeks to honor God. But, as humanity multiplies, so does sin. The trouble in paradise escalates to trouble in man's relation to one another and to God. Will it be my way or God's Way? My evil destructive choices or God's perfect plan? At the same time, the skill of bronze and iron age, aquaculture, musical instruments, practical technology and the marvels of human thinking, ingenuity and problem solving does not translate with humanity's maturity in dealing with one another. Corruption invades to a tipping point; God has to reboot His creation and start over with the one righteous family left, Noah. Now, God has a new Covenant and a people to work with and through.

Key Happenings and a New Beginning!

Abraham and a new Nation

Genesis 12 is a crucial passage where God sets up His plan for all nations giving all people the opportunity to know Him. Even though God's wondrous beautiful mural gets stained and messed up, He perseveres. After the beginning was ruin and rebellion, chaos and strife; yet, God persists with His mercy. Instead of a God who just gets mad and crushes the vandals, He shows His love with a plan. He chooses a righteous man and his family to work through, the archetype on how He works through the Christian. He perseveres to give His instruction, love, care, protection and continues to work in humanity, through the mess--through the chaos we created to craft a new beauty of His coming redemption with grace. The Savior is eternal, but now the need for Christ is firmly established to repair our relationship and standing with God (Psalm 90:2; 139:14; John 1:1-3, 14).

God continues to reveal Himself to humanity; He works and wants to speak to us. The question is, do we see the astounding wonder of Who God is? Do we see His Divine activity and if so are we excited about Him, grateful for life and the environment to live and even thrive in? Do we see the sin and the causes of chaos and dysfunction and can we guard against it?

Vs. 12:1, Go from your country. Abram had to leave all he knew and go by faith to a new life. God is the Builder of our lives, who works our faith and future for us. God gave the land, but the land was not the main thing; He is! **He** is our heaven and our *rest* to come. God's reward for the faithful is His

guidance now and, then, the *rest* to come (Psalm 137: 5-6; 147:2; Isa 62:5; Gal. 6:24; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21: 2-4, 9-27).

Abram (God will rename him Abraham), as *Hebrews 11 declares, walked by faith*. He is the ultimate Patriarch and father of the Jewish faith and lineage. His example of obedience was to respond to God by leaving his homeland and going to an unseen destination. He could not see, but trusted in God for a promise, a future inheritance as well as waiting actively upon God; as a stranger in a foreign land, he was an example of faith. This was not blind faith, rather complete confidence in God because He is trustworthy. All of this is paramount to show obedient faith when things are not evident. Because of his faith and obedience, God declared him righteous and made him the quintessential representative for faith and righteousness (Gen. 11: 31-32; 12:1-3; 16:1-4; 17:1-5, 17-18; Rom. 4:1-22; Gal. 3:7, 9, 29).

Your people and your father's household. God works through people and places. He interdicts into the life and times of Abram and changes his name and identity and gives him a prime purpose as Abraham, the father of faith and the Nation to tell the story of God. This forges a 400-year intimacy with the early Nation of Israel. The people of this clan become a great nation that still survives thousands of years later, like no other that has ever existed.

This is the birth of Israel, a chosen people with a purpose. They were called to know the One True God and model His instructions to the world as they pass through Canaan, later called Palestine. God sets up the Israelites in the most crucial land on this planet, why people still fight over that small tract of land thousands of years hence. Every people on earth sends their tradesmen, merchants, and military through it. Whoever controlled this ancient realm also controlled the world's trade routes and commerce of the entire world. God set up His people as the signpost to His Holiness and presence.

Vs. 12:2-3, I will bless you; to be a blessing. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you. This is called the Abrahamic Promise, repeated in 22:16-17. This is a testament of how God worked through His chosen people and works with us today. This is a 'covenant' of God to the Jews first, and then to all of humanity to *be faithful and I will bless you*. This is also a call to be personally faithful and to place God first and foremost in our lives. As God intervenes in us, we respond back to Him by faith, as Abraham demonstrated (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:8-21; 17:1-14; 18:18; 22:1-18; Ex.32:13; Is. 60:1-5; Matt: 5:3-12; Rom. 4:13; Heb. 11:16; Rev. 7:9-17; 11:9).

Why is this important? Our God is a God of promises Who keeps His Word! He gave a promise to Abraham and has kept it for all generations. God is Great and nothing is greater than Him—there is nothing greater to live or swear by. He told Abraham, *I will bless you and increase your descendants into a countless multitude of nations*. God even told him *all nations will be blessed through you*.

Vs. 12:4, So Abram went, he believed God! Abraham gives us an example even in his sin and failures he still looked to God and, when he did sin, God restored him. He remained faithful, and he was able to develop character and be an example for us and entity. The question is, do you remain faithful even in hard times? Faith helps us be faithful (Psalm 119: 89-90; Matt. 17:19; 25:21; Rom. 1:17; 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 5:22-23; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Thess. 5:24).

Vs. 12:5, wife Sarai, God will rename her *Sarah*. We will see her conceive a child when she was way past childbearing age. She is the prime matriarch of the Jewish faith, model of women of faith, and example of faithfulness; her greatness was extolled in Judaism (Gen. 11:30; 18:11-12; 21:5; Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:1-16).

Abram's father Terah perhaps received the call first, but when he went from their home of *Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan*, he got distracted for some reason halfway in Harran. God then called Abram to move from that wealthy city, with its luxury, comfort, to the life of a 'Hebrew,' meaning wonderer, who live in tents. Now he still has his wealth in farm animals and coinage. He has a nice tent, with a floor and walls of Person rugs, inner chambers to resist heat and cold--all he needed, but not like he had it. This is much like like moving from a luxury home to a nice motor home. But Abram had to make a response of faith; he had to leave all that he knew to go somewhere that God's said will be better (Gen. 11:27-32).

Vs. 12:8, east of Bethel and pitched his tent, has become a theme of focus, who or what or Who or What has our focus. This is a special place in Jewish history, where Abram first shows his faith and trust in God, where God identified himself to Jacob, in Genesis, and where Jacob built an altar in memory of his vision there (Jacob's Ladder, Gen. 28:10-22; 31:13; 35:7). Have you recognized who He is?

We have a God who is there, who cares, and in whom we can have assurance and take refuge. He is personal and trustworthy so we can be faith-worthy. We have an anchor for our souls, as He leads us to the safe harbor of His presence and plan, and into eternity.

Vs. 12:13, Say you are my sister, Abram still struggled with faith and doubts and God's power to intervene by saying his wife was his sister. She was a half sister, so he did not lie, but he did not fully trust God yet, that big test will come with Isaac. This is how he sought to be prudent, yet later we will see he could not wait for God's promise and acted on his own, producing the thorn in his heritage's side, Ishmael. Abram demonstrated his authenticity to the "regular" people (as we all are.) We all make mistakes, and God is there with his forgiveness and restoration. At the end of the day, he is faithful--and so we can be, too (Heb. 11:17-31)!

Abraham and Sarah did not get the promise of the land in their lifetime, but they received so much more--a relationship with God and a place in eternity. Faith is beyond mere belief; it is allowing our confidence in Him for daily living to stretch us beyond what we think we can do, and God will reward us for doing so.

Our faith is secured by God's oath and promise, thus our faith can endure as we look to Christ. Abraham is our example for this. We are not alone in this journey of life; we have Christ Himself as example and lead. We are not only called to spiritual growth--that is, the formation of the investment of faith Christ gives us—but, we are also to give back to Him in dividends. This is a deep conviction of our faith, a practiced submission that shows our obedience, and a life of personal, spiritual, and relational maturity. We have to listen to God. If not, we will not learn, and we will not grow; we will not have a life of transformation and growth. Instead, we will have a storm-tossed sea of life, wayward in every perspective because our eyes and ears are not upon our Lord (Psalm 110:4; James 1).

Key Takeaway: *God will bless you; ... you will be a blessing... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you!* This points us to how Christ's work is credited to us as righteousness. God is God, and we are not. We must focus on Him and not our pride and plans. He is never changing; yet He condescends to meet us with salvation that is undeserved on our part and something He is not obligated to give to us (Gal. 3:6-9; Heb. 11:9).

The foreshadow of Jesus Christ? Abram demonstrates that faith in God points to the fact that we also have hope and life in Christ!

Questions to Ponder

Read Genesis 12

1. Abram was seventy-five years old, when God called upon him! Why the wait? How do you feel about people who are a lot older? What does God want us to think?
2. What does God tell Abram to do and why? What is the benefit, the upside? The down side?
3. Do we see the sin and the causes of chaos and dysfunction and can we guard against it?
4. Why do you think God set up the Jewish people as the signpost to His Holiness and presence? Who do so many people hate them over the centuries?
5. Do you see a radical contrast between chapters 11 and 12?
6. How do you feel that God is the initiator of reconciliation and healing and purpose? Where do you need God's initiation? Where do you need to be the initiator?
7. How is Abram an example of faith to us even in his sin and failures?
8. How are you confronted and encouraged by the fact that God intervenes in us, we respond back to Him by faith?
9. How does this passage show how God works through us Christians? What do you need to learn and apply from this passage?
10. Where has God blessed you? How can you be more aware of God's blessing and have gratitude for it?
11. What does it take to see the amazing Holiness of Who God is? Do we see His Divine activity in and around you?
12. How can you be more excited about Him, grateful for life and faith? How can you better see His works and listen when He speaks to you?