

Genesis 12A (2011)

- Last week we turned the corner into part two of Genesis
 - Part one of Genesis was a trilogy of sorts
 - A three-part story of the never-ending, all-consuming destructive power of sin
 - It began with the sin of the garden
 - And God responded by denying man fellowship with Himself
 - It continued with the depravity of ancient men with the cohabitation of demons
 - God responded by denying man their land, drowning mankind, separating continents, moving mountains
 - And leaving a small family to restart humanity
 - Finally, it progressed to a united rebellious people worshipping false gods, seeking a name for themselves
 - And so God responded by scattering them, denying man fellowship with the other families of the earth
 - Causing men to separate and live in isolation from one another
 - Fellowship with God, peace in the land, and a family of descendants
 - Three things taken from mankind because of the destructive effects of sin
 - At this rate, sinful man will bring himself to nothing if something isn't done to correct the problem of sin
- Enter God's promise to Abram

Gen. 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;

Gen. 12:2 And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

- At the end of Chapter 11, we were told that Abram's father took Abram and Abram's family and traveled back to Haran, Terah's home town
 - Moses told us in Chapter 11 that the purpose of the travel was for Abram to enter into Canaan
 - Now Moses explains why the family made such an unusual move
 - They were obeying God's command to move according to His direction
 - Chapter 11 also told us that Terah died while they were in Haran
 - But now Abram begins to move again, and makes his way directly into Canaan
 - And Moses gives us the detail in Chapter 12 for what prompted Abram to make this journey
 - He receives this astonishing revelation from God
 - Remember, Abram and his father knew nothing of the one true God before this moment
 - One day Abram is just minding his own business, worshipping pagan gods like everyone else
 - Then God appeared in some manner and reveals Himself to Abram
 - He tells Abram to leave his own country and relatives and his father's house and enter a strange land that God will reveal
 - And God declares that He will bring Abram to glory, with a great name, a great nation of people, a man of strength
 - And a man who will bless all the families or nations of the earth

- That's quite a promise, the first of seven times God will appear to Abram (later Abraham)
 - But notice it begins with a command
 - God tells Abram that he must begin this chain by an obedient step of leaving his home
 - More specifically, Abram must leave his country, Ur
 - He must leave his relatives, his extended family
 - Finally, he must leave his father's house, that is his father's ancestral home in Haran
 - God's plan to use Abram depends on Abram leaving everything in the world in which Abram finds his identity and security
 - Instead, he must obey God's voice, depend on God's promises and rely on His provision
 - We might stop and wonder at this point what might have happened had Abram never obeyed, but such speculation is pointless
 - Abram did obey, and scripture tells us why Abram felt compelled to take that step

[Heb. 11:8](#) By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

- Abram had no idea where he was going, but he had faith in God's word
 - And that faith compelled him forward, overcame his doubts and objections and brought him into God's blessing
- In the first three verses, God begins to reveal His covenant with Abram
 - This isn't the moment the covenant is officially inaugurated...that comes in a later chapter
 - But it's no less sure at this point
 - God is merely revealing His promises to Abram in stages
 - And at this early point, God has told Abram everything he needs to know

- Hebrews 11:8 makes clear that Abram is acting in faith of God's promises
 - However God made it happen, He revealed Himself to Abram in such a manner that Abram came to know God truly
 - And in hearing God's word in these promises, Abram believed
 - And at this moment, Abram has begun his walk of faith
 - In a later chapter of Genesis, we see God declaring Abram righteous in recognition of His faith
 - But Hebrews 11 tells us that Abram's faith began as he departed Ur
 - In fact, it was because of Abram's faith that he left the East and journeyed to the West
- It's easy to see why Abram has become the classic Biblical picture of walking in faith
 - God reveals Himself today through His Son Jesus Christ
 - Hebrews tells us that by all the past revelation, God was building toward the full measure of Christ

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,
Heb. 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- And by that revelation, we have the same opportunity to obey like Abram did
 - And we are asked to do the same things Abram did
 - In spiritual terms, we are asked to leave behind the world we knew, our pursuit of self and pride and seek God's kingdom

John 12:25 "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

- Like Abram, we are asked to forsake family connections if necessary to obey God completely

[Matt. 10:37](#) "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

- Following Jesus means we turn our back on the world
 - And in place of what the world offers, we trust that what Jesus holds in store for us is so much better
- And like Abram didn't know what God was prepared to offer Abram as an inheritance, we too are in the dark
 - We understand we've been rescued from the penalty of our sin on the basis of our faith
 - But that's just our starting point, like Abram hearing God in Ur and coming to know God in the face of Jesus
 - But then our walk begins, and we walk faithfully because we trust God's promise of an inheritance
 - And we look forward to something greater that can't be found in this world
 - Just like Abram did

[Heb. 11:9](#) By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

[Heb. 11:10](#) for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

- So it's easy to see why so many generations of God's children have looked back at Abram's call and recognized God's fingerprints in their own lives
 - And as we begin a detailed examination of the man and his life of faith, we'll have plenty of opportunity to draw comparisons to our own walk of faith
- For example, let's look at the promises Abram heard while in Ur
 - It came in three parts
 - God will elaborate on these three parts during His six additional appearances
 - But we see the framework established here

- First, Abram is told that he is being sent to a new land, a land God will reveal
 - Abram will begin a long walk to a strange land without a clear idea of what he will find there
 - You might compare Abram's walk of faith to a husband who has been blindfolded and is taken by the hand by his wife, who has a surprise waiting in the next room
 - The husband follows the wife trusting that something good is coming, but he doesn't know where's he's going or what he will find
 - Once he arrives, the wife removes the blindfold and reveals a new HDTV
 - So first, Abram is given a promise of land, an inheritance God appoints
- Secondly, God says in v.2 that Abram will be granted a nation (or family) and he will obtain a name that will be great
 - This promise is especially interesting since we know Abram's wife is barren
 - Yet somehow Abram is told to expect that a new nation will come from him
 - In Chapter 10 we heard that God created 70 nations from Noah
 - Now we hear that God is prepared to create a 71st nation from Abram
 - And to be sure the world knows it was a nation birthed by God, the wife of Abram starts the story barren
 - So Abram will receive a new family and this posterity will result in Abram's name becoming great
- Finally, Abram will be a blessing to the world
 - He will see those who bless him be blessed
 - And those who curse him will be cursed by God

- Each of these promises have a specific fulfillment in the life of Abram and family of people that come from him
 - For example, Abram's promise of a nation and a name is fulfilled in the rise of Israel and the reverence they have for their father Abraham
 - He receives a new name when he becomes Abraham
 - And he will obtain fame that extends even today and to Jews, Arabs and Christians
 - The promise of land is eventually fulfilled by the twelve tribes of Israel receiving the land of Canaan
 - And Abram will eventually receive this land in the future kingdom when Christ returns to Earth
 - Finally, the promise of blessing and cursing can be seen in Abram's life and in Israel generally
 - Both find God protecting them from adversaries and blessing their allies
- But these promises also have greater fulfillment in a spiritual sense
 - Looking at the promise in reverse order, for example...
 - Abram was told that through him the families of the Earth will be blessed
 - The ultimate fulfillment of this promise is understood to be Jesus Himself
 - We'll see this more clearly in future chapters as God reveals it to Abram
 - We'll see that the blessing God intends to deliver to the world through Abram will be fully realized in the Messiah
 - Furthermore, God says that those who bless and curse Abram will receive the same in return
 - Remember, we've said before that "curse" in the Bible means eternal damnation
 - A sentence of hell that can't be reversed

- So blessing and curses are juxtaposed here to suggest a contrast between heaven and hell
 - Those who align themselves with Abram's example of faith in God's word will see the same spiritual outcome that Abram sees: salvation and eternal blessing
 - But those who oppose Abram's example, those who remain aligned with the world, will receive the wages of their sin and eternal judgment
- And in this way, God's promise to Abram will become the means for bringing blessing to the families (or tribes) of the earth
- Next, Abram is told he will receive a name for himself, and so will those who follow in his footsteps
 - Jesus says to believers that as we arrive in His presence we receive new names that only Jesus knows
 - Names that reflect our honor and service to Him

Rev. 2:17 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

- Finally, Abram was promised an inheritance in the land
 - And we who have followed Abram's example of trusting in God's word also have an eternal inheritance awaiting
 - Like Abram and his descendants, we will have a place in the kingdom to call our own
 - And we will receive rewards that follow us into that world as a reflection of our service and faithfulness to Christ in these days of waiting
 - Just as Abram's blessing was contingent on his willingness to walk and follow God, so does our inheritance turn on our obedience
 - Our faith and therefore our salvation is by God's grace and isn't in question

- But to receive the full measure of our inheritance, we must be willing to let God lead us by the hand and show us a better place and a new life
- These three promises are the gateway into all that follows in the entire Bible
 - They represent not only God's kindness and mercy to a man named Abram
 - But they are God's grace and love to a fallen world
 - In fact, I want you to remember the trilogy of Chapters 1-11 again
 - We saw sinful men lose fellowship in God's presence and in God's kingdom in the Garden
 - We watched sinful men wiped off their land and lose their lives in the flood
 - We witnessed idol worshipping men seeking a name for themselves only to be separated from their families and scattered
 - Now in Chapter 12, God sets the terms for correcting all three sad episodes
 - By these promises to Abram, God provides the means by which He will restore our fellowship with Him
 - And He sets us firmly in our inheritance in the future land of the Kingdom without fear of ever suffering loss again
 - And He gives us new names that glorifies God, and He grants us adoption into the family of God, calling us sons and daughters,
 - And gives us one voice by which we may speak with Him, that is the voice of the Spirit
- The Apostle John was privileged to see this fulfillment in advance in his revelation, where he recorded the scene this way:

[Rev. 21:1](#) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

[Rev. 21:2](#) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

[Rev. 21:3](#) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them ,

[Rev. 21:4](#) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

- In considering God's plan in all its intricate detail, it brings to mind Paul's exclamation at the end of Romans 11, and I can think of no more fitting way to close our lesson:

[Rom. 11:33](#) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

[Rom. 11:34](#) For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

[Rom. 11:35](#) Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

[Rom. 11:36](#) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.