

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Week 2 - Day 4: Abraham and His Descendants

Genesis 12: 1-3 NIV “The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ‘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.’”

As opposed to the prideful people at the Tower of Babel, Abraham (who used to be called Abram) was called by God to be the father of a humble and God-centered people. Oddly enough, Abraham was childless and past the age where he could have reasonably expected to have an heir who could carry on his name, let alone become a “great nation” that would influence the world. He had very little way to build up for himself any kind of kingdom on earth.

Despite all of this, God still announces these promises for Abraham and asks him to step into an unknown plan. While God met Abraham on a personal level, God was (and is!) orchestrating events on a cosmic scale to use Abraham’s family to fulfill His **kingdom purposes**, namely to bring God’s blessing and glory to all of those who would have faith in God’s lordship over their lives.

But like all other humans, Abraham was flawed.

Just after Abraham makes a sacrifice to God to thank Him for their new relationship, Abraham leaves the promised land and endangers his own wife out of fear. In the face of what seemed like a life or death situation, Abraham acts on his own *knowledge of good and evil* rather than on the good promises God has made.

How often have I listened to my own wisdom and fear instead of the good promises of God? How much more time do I spend stewing over my bills, rather than praying through verses about God’s provision? How often do I send away the people and spiritual disciplines that God prescribes to bolster my emotional health when I’m faced with something that feels devastating?

Despite Abraham’s faults, God makes a way for Abraham and his family to remain safe. Moreover, He reaffirms the promises made to Abraham, that His offspring will become a blessed nation in the land promised to him (Genesis 13: 14-17). God continues to keep a place for him in this kingdom story.

But why?

When God speaks to Abraham later in Genesis 15:1 (AMP) saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; Your reward [for obedience] shall be very great,” Abraham gets *cheeky* with God. Essentially, He responds with something to the effect of “What reward? Because what I really want is a child to be my heir, and all I’ve got now for an heir is my secretary.” God doesn’t

get mad at Abraham's forwardness, but instead gives him one of the most beautiful messages of reassurance in the Bible.

Genesis 15: 4-6 NIV 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." 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." Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

It was Abraham's simple act of faith that was enough for God to bestow upon him the quality of righteousness. In that moment, Abraham didn't have to be perfect, or sinless, or win a battle, or preach a sermon, he just had to believe what God was telling him, buying into God's designed plan, and God gifts Abraham righteousness. He couldn't have made himself right with God on his own merit. We see over and over in Genesis that he was a flawed human being. It was God who reached out to this broken man and offered a relationship, a family, and a legacy he never could have achieved by himself as part of the much larger plan of God. In fact a few verses later, we find God establishing new and good covenant promises over Abraham's family **with Himself** knowing that Abraham would inevitably "fall asleep at the wheel" (Gen. 15:10-21). Abraham was invited into God's **kingdom purposes** and blessings not because of any internal, Abraham-ish quality, but because God called him, and God squared his rap sheet so that he could participate in God's kingdom.

Just as God drew close to an imperfect and longing Abraham, God also met the needs of so many people in Abraham's family. Two of the most poignant examples come from people that suffered tremendously within the family. Abraham's servant Hagar had been mistreated and sent away into the desert, anguished to the point of suicide, and unable to care for her young son. However, God appeared to her, soothed her fears, and promised that her son Ishmael would have a nation of descendants. He then led her to a well where she could provide for Ishmael. God still kept his promise to Abraham's illegitimate family reassuring them that their fears were known and He had a plan to help them. Hagar's sentiment after experiencing God is so beautiful:

Genesis 16:13 "I have now seen the One who sees me."

Abraham's great-grandson Joseph also experienced God through a life of hardship. Terrible things happened to him and for years he seemed to move from one kind of mistreatment to the next. Genesis 39:2 reminds us, however, that God was with Joseph the whole time and that because of the way God was working behind the scenes, Joseph's enslavement slowly transformed into a situation of respect. What seemed like steps backward in social status to our eyes became the very means by which God raises up Joseph to the #2 leader in all of Egypt!

This pattern of God offering blessings despite the brokenness of Abraham's family teaches us that rooting ourselves in God's kingdom is a great decision! What does it mean to be rooted in (to adhere to, to join, to believe in) God's kingdom? It means that no matter what comes our way, He is King over all things! We allow this truth to determine our lives, thoughts, and actions.

Abraham believed that God would give him the heir he longed for, so he strived to follow God's instructions even when they appeared to be counterintuitive (Genesis 22). Hagar began to believe that God would save herself and her son, so she got up and went to the well God provided for them. Joseph clung to the place he knew God was making for him in His kingdom, so he fled from temptation and gave God the credit whenever something miraculous happened.

God has dominion over His creation, and we are invited to be a part of what the King of all things is doing for his family of people. He lovingly draws near to us, speaks into our struggles, and promises that our prioritization of His kingdom will lead to blessings!

Don't misunderstand me; this isn't a message saying that if you pray some words then all your dreams will come true and you will be rich. Abraham was almost 100 when he finally got his heir, and Joseph was a slave and a prisoner, but both of them lived with **hope** in trying circumstances. Both of them received steady blessings from the Lord. Both of them played important roles in revealing who this powerful God is to this world. Finally, both of them received blessings after YEARS of waiting.

Genesis ends with this beautiful sentiment:

Genesis 50:20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives"

In this moment, Joseph is forgiving his brothers (yeah, those guys that sold him into slavery and started a whole chain reaction of terrible life events for Joseph). He explains how their free-will decisions in this life couldn't stand against the predetermined outcome that God had planned. God can do anything, even use awful things to bring about His desired outcomes. God can even transform our mindset so that we can see this broader perspective and contextualize the good and the bad in His broader kingdom plan.

Now, let's consider the whole book of Genesis!

After seeing the pattern of human sin over and over in this book, God still manages to move His kingdom story forward. He explains the role of humans in His kingdom, He explains the experience of human sin and its growing effects, and then He sets in motion His **kingdom purposes** of restoration through His faithful servants.

Through Abraham and his descendants, He now has given us the language we need to understand an "Isaac-like" son of Abraham would come to sacrifice himself. He alludes to the one who would come from Israel to rule all nations through the line of Judah.

Could this be the descendant of the woman who would crush the serpent?

Genesis 49:10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

Abraham, his servant Hagar, and his great-grandson Joseph all lived super long ago in a super different culture. Yet so many of us are like Abraham's descendants, sometimes prioritizing what

God wants in a situation and sometimes choosing what seems best (or safest, or most interesting) to us especially in our sufferings. One of the amazing beauties of Genesis is that God sees our hearts on a personal level, draws close to us, and invites us into His grand **kingdom purposes**. I am so encouraged to know that God doesn't dismiss our pain, but He promises us that He will not let it go to waste. When I see my friends hurting, Genesis tells me that God has dealt with hurt before and offers a way of **HOPE**. When I stew in fear or anxiety instead of sitting in his comfort and promises, my King is ready to reach out and remind me once again of the plans He has for me.

-Kelly Kaufman

Share the Gospel: Abraham is called to have faith in God's promise to lead him towards good blessings. Abraham believes in God and God's kingdom restoration plan moves forward through his family. God reveals His glory to His new kingdom family by drawing them back into His rule through a relationship with Him and reestablishing His kingdom land. While God met Abraham and his family marked by sin on a personal level, sin could not stop God from orchestrating events on a cosmic scale to repurpose Abraham's family to spread God's blessing and glory to those who would have faith in God's lordship over their lives.

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: