

*Advent***He Comes to Make His Blessings Flow****Genesis 12:1-4**

“...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The opening verses of Genesis chapter 12 have been called by some the most important verses in the Bible. Hyperbole? Perhaps. And yet it is certainly a helpful overstatement because what is described in these verses is an event which will shape the rest of the biblical narrative and, indeed, human history. The event described is God’s call to a pagan named Abram to gather up his family and all his possessions and travel to a land that he had never seen. It is a call for Abram to abandon his idols and look in faith to God alone. God promised Abram that from him

would come a descendant who would bless all the nations on earth. As the Bible unfolds it becomes clear that his descendant is the serpent crusher promised in Genesis 3:15, the divine Redeemer, the Son of God.



What is described in Genesis 12 is God’s covenant of grace whereby he promised to send a Savior to redeem a vast number of sinful humanity (Gen. 15:5). This gracious covenant is further explained and ratified in chapters 15 and 17 of Genesis. In the ruins of human sin God spoke a promise of grace. So great would be the number of those blessed through Abram’s offspring that God changed his name, which meant father of a nation, to *Abraham*, father of many nations.

Advent means appearing. Christians who celebrate Advent do so as a way to mark the arrival of God in human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. All the blessings which have flowed to sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus were promised by God to Abraham.

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the great and final fulfillment of the ages old promise God made to Abraham that He would save a vast number of sinners throughout the world through his Offspring.

**1. God’s people were formed by grace.**

Vs. 1 – “Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

- Abram was a pagan living in the region of Ur when God called to him and chose him for his own. There was nothing Abram had done or could do to endear himself to God. Abram had not proven himself to be a particularly “choosable” man. The reason God chose Abram over any of the other men upon the face of the earth belongs to the mysteries of God’s sovereign grace.
- Genesis 11:26 tells us that Abram had two brothers, Nahor and Haran. Abram is listed which would tend to indicate that he was the first born. But apparently Abram was the youngest of the three brothers. The reason he is listed first is because God has chosen the younger to be the line of promise (not the last time God followed this pattern). In this act of choosing the younger, like that of the choice of Jacob over Esau, God is demonstrating his sovereign grace. God takes initiative. He proves his grace again and again by choosing those whom either the world or the self-righteous would ignore or reject.
- God saves us by the same grace in which he saved Abram. He seeks us when we are unable and unwilling to seek him. He saves us in our helpless and sinful state. He sets his affections upon us not

because we have proven ourselves worthy of such love. Rather, God loves us and saves us out of the unsearchable mysteries of his grace.

## 2. God's promises are secured by covenant.

Vs. 2-3 – [2] “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

- What is described in Genesis 12 is God's covenant of grace whereby he promised to send a Savior to redeem a vast number of sinful humanity (Gen. 15:5). This gracious covenant is further explained and ratified in chapters 15 and 17 of Genesis. In the ruins of human sin God spoke a promise of grace. So great would be the number of those blessed through Abram's offspring that God changed his name, which meant father of **a nation**, to *Abraham*, father of **nations**.
- God turned catastrophe into blessings. He snatched life from the jaws of death. In his grace God answered the wickedness and tragedy of mankind's rebellion with a promise of redemption. The Creator was unwilling to walk away from his human creatures. But because of mankind's sinful condition, a relationship with his holy Creator must be based upon something formal; a structure which makes it just and moral for God to forgive sinners. That formal structure is known as a covenant. **A covenant is a sovereignly ordered relationship where two parties are bound by oath to one another.** In his covenant of grace God bound himself to Abraham and all those throughout human history who would believe (Galatians 3:7-9, 14, 29). It is a covenant of *GRACE* because God promised to meet all of the demands of the covenant himself.
- “Man's redemption is inextricably bound with redemptive history, as God has progressively revealed Himself in covenant to His corporate people, culminating in His revelation in Christ. Knowledge of God is openly revealed in the concrete events of redemptive history in God's condescension to His fallen creatures. Beginning in the Old Testament, God covenanted with historical flesh-and-blood people, and He gave the new covenant through the God-man Jesus. Theologians, therefore, cannot merely start with the advent of Christ and the individual's profession of faith, but must account for God's covenantal dealings with His people from the very beginning in the garden-temple of Eden” (Fesko, John, Word, Water, and Spirit, Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2010, 4).

## 3. God's blessings are experienced through faith.

Vs. 4 – “So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

- The first words of verse 4 are words of faith. Abram believed and so he acted in obedience. Abram went as the Lord told him because, by God's grace, Abram believed. Abraham was justified before God not by works but through faith. The same is true for us. The invitation to the unbeliever is the same throughout the Bible: Believe and be saved. But while faith and obedience are two different things, they are complementary things and must never be separated. Abraham's faith was a saving faith; a faith that obeys. From this point on Abraham would be known as the father of the faithful; the great man of faith. This was such a vital reality that generations later, Christians would be known as heirs of Abraham (Galatians 3:7).
- Genesis 15:6 – “And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”
- Romans 9:8 – “This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.”
- Romans 4:1-6 – “What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works...”
- Romans 4:13-14 – “For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.”