

God's Mission on Earth

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Text: Genesis 12:1-9¹

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Series: Genesis (The Book of Beginnings)

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Genesis 12:1-3**. The title of our study tonight is “The Mission of God on Earth”.

We talk about missions. Missionaries raise support. They learn languages. They learn cultural habits and methods of relating to another culture. That is all missions. But there is a difference between that and the mission. The mission of Jesus Christ was given before He ascended to heaven—that we are to preach His Gospel to every creature. We are to aim for the conversion of their soul and baptize and instruct them in all the things He commanded. Making disciples of Jesus Christ is our mission. The mission of God on earth is to save sinners—to redeem them, and in so doing, to supernaturally convert them and to transform them to the image of His Son.

In Genesis 12, we are going to find out that God is a missionary. He salvages Noah's family, but then the earth quickly turns wicked again, so He divides the people into many languages, but focuses on one family—Peleg's family. Peleg is the ancestor of Abram. So today we are going to see how God, through Abram is going to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the whole earth.

What is the good news? It's offensive in our culture. It is that Jesus Christ has made a way to heaven. But He's not just “a” way, He's the only way to heaven.

The idea of the mission of Jesus Christ is not at all popular in today's pluralistic world. Pluralism is belief system that affirms the validity of every religion and denies any claims to exclusivity. There is a growing hostility in the world toward evangelism. The desire to convert anybody let alone every single person to one exclusive way to heaven is looked upon as scandalous, intolerant, and supremely arrogant.

- How can anyone claim a monopoly on the truth?
- Are there not many ways to God?
- What right do we have to interfere in other people's private lives?
- We should mind our own business.

Do we hear people talking like that? They are not only in society, but even in the church. I have a book in my hand called “A New Kind of Christianity” by Brian McLaren. He asks these same questions and says we should unite with Muslims and Jews and all stripes of Christians. I believe his book should be retitled “A New Kind of Heresy”.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

Let me be clear: I am not denying that Christians have at times been arrogant in presenting the true Gospel, but that is a matter of the heart, and where we are arrogant we need to repent. But it is not arrogant to present the only way of salvation that God has given. That is not arrogance but love.

The task of world evangelization has been given to us. Evangelism is foundational to the Christian faith. If we surrender evangelism, we deny our message because Jesus Christ is the exclusive way to heaven for all people. We say with Peter in **Acts 4:12**, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Jesus Christ has no rivals. He is the one and only Savior. He therefore has universal significance to all men. He is the one and only thing that matters in the universe. A hundred years from now anything with value to us will have lost all meaning, and the only thing that will matter is your trust in Jesus. Everything in the universe. He must be made known to every human being throughout the world.

Christian mission is rooted in the nature of God Himself. He is a missionary God who sent His Son to be a missionary to this world of sinners. He set up His church as a missionary outpost to proclaim that there is hope and forgiveness in Christ. The promise of Christ’s coming was given first in Genesis 3:15. He will be the seed of the woman. But Genesis 12 gets more specific. He will not only be the seed of the woman. He will be from family of Abraham.

Bible scholars point to **Genesis 12:1-3** as one of the most unifying text in the whole Bible. God’s whole purpose to reach the entire world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is outlined in this prophecy. God intends to bless all nations through **Christ** who is the Seed of Abraham. The rest of the Bible is a gradual unfolding of this breathtaking text.

The very history of the world is a fulfillment of this text. We here today as Christ’s church with all our ethnic and family histories are the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham to bless the nations through Abraham’s Seed, Jesus Christ.

After the judgments of the flood and the tower of Babel, it is clear God wanted to make a new beginning. And the key person that God uses to make a new beginning is the man God calls out of pagan Ur to Himself—Abraham.

This passage is foundational to understand the Bible. This will be foundational until the day we all meet Jesus and we will see that the Seed of Abraham being more numerous than the stars in the sky and the sands of the sea will finally be fulfilled!

We begin reading in **Genesis 11:31**, “Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.” Verse 32 says that Abraham’s father died there.

What prompted them to move? They emigrated about a thousand miles north along the River Euphrates to Haran. Why would they do that? Because of the call that is given in verses 1-3 of Genesis 12. Abraham received his call from God while he was in Ur of the Chaldees. It is clear from archeology that they worshipped the moon. But God stops Abraham in his tracks and calls him to leave his country follow Him to the Promised Land.

Let's read **Genesis 12:1-3**, "Now the LORD [*had*] said [*this is what is called a plu-perfect*] to Abram, "Go from your **country** and your **kindred** and your **father's house** to the **land** that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great **nation**, and I will bless you and make your name great. 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.**"

From here Abraham goes another 500 miles south to the land of Canaan.

So God tells Abraham to leave his country and his family, and He promises Abraham another country and another family. More importantly, God promises that through his Seed, through Christ He will bless all the families of the earth.

We have a simple outline tonight. Three questions.

- What does this passage tell us about Abraham – to whom God made the promise?
 - What does this passage tell us about Christ, the Seed of Abraham – in whom the promise was fulfilled?
 - What does this passage tell us about ourselves, who are the children of Abraham by faith in Christ.
- I. What does this passage tell us about **Abraham** – to whom God made the promise?
Verse 1, "Go from your **country** and your **kindred** and your **father's house** to the **land** that I will show".
- A. Abraham's **hometown**, Ur of the Chaldeans. **Ur of the Chaldeans** is an ancient city in southern **BABYLONIA**, the remains of which are located in modern Southern Iraq. He leaves the city of man for the city of God!

We know a lot about Ur of the Chaldeans. In the 1920s and 30s, a renowned archaeologist by the name of Sir Leonard Woolley found that before Abraham lived in Ur, around 2500 BC, Ur had a highly developed culture and was one of the centers of Moon worship.

We read in **Joshua 24:2**, "Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.'"

These other gods would have included moon worship.

B. Abraham's **call** comes in two stages.

1. He receives the call in Ur and makes it to **Haran**, a thousand miles northwest along the River Euphrates to Haran where his father died.
2. Then he goes 500 miles south to the land of **Canaan**, or what is modern day Israel.



C. Abraham was to leave his **country** and **family**. These are the two deepest roots of our personal identity. You never realize this more than if you live in another country. God calls Abraham to sever both of these roots. To compensate for this, God promises to replace them both.

God said, "Leave your country and family, but I'll give you a new country and a new family." Verse 1, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you...3 in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Abraham obeyed God because he believed the promises of God. He left Ur and went to Haran and later to Canaan.

He's promised a land, but he's given a tent to dwell in! He has no permanent dwelling place.

He's promised a seed, but we find out very soon that Sara is barren! Genesis 11:30, "Now Sarai was barren; she had no child."

D. God took an extraordinarily long time for God to fulfill His **promises**.

1. Abraham was promised **land**, but never got it. **Verses 4-9**, “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. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 ¶ **Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.**” So Abraham didn’t stay in the land of Canaan because the Canaanites were there.

But God promises a family to Abram that will one day inhabit the land. **Verse 7**, “Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.”

From there he goes to a place very near Jerusalem in verse 8, “From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.” But Abraham doesn’t stay there. **Verse 9**, “And Abram journeyed on, still going [south] toward the Negeb.” This is the desert area south of the Dead Sea.

Verse 10 tells us that because of famine, Abram leaves Canaan and dwells in Egypt.

In **Genesis 13:1** he returns to the Negeb.

And then in **Genesis 13:18** he moves his way to Hebron. He’s moving all around and he’s got no land and no seed! All he’s got is a barren wife and a tent.

Abraham NEVER occupied the land he was promised. All his life he remained a nomad, a tent dweller and a pilgrim. When he died, all he had of the promised land was a tent and a cave he bought from the Hittites to bury his wife in.

2. What about God’s promise of a Seed—a **family**, a nation? God kept repeating the promise to Abraham. Abraham was having a hard time with God’s promise.

We read in **Genesis 15:3-6**, Abraham wanted to make Eliezer his servant the heir. He wanted to help God. “And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household [*Eliezer of Damascus*] will be my heir.” 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” 5 And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are

able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

But at the time of this promise he had no children. He tried to raise up a Seed through Hagar. God says that’s not the way. It’s through Sara that I’ll raise up the Seed. And even when Abraham died, all he had from Sara was Isaac.

God promised him a **country**, but he didn’t inherit it. God promised him a **family**, but all he had was one son.

Abraham obeyed God because he knew God would keep His promises. He believed God to the point that Hebrews 11:17 tells us he was willing to offer up his only son, believing God would raise him back from the dead!

Hebrews 11:17-19, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.”

God promised him a **country**, but all he had was a tent and a cave. God promised him a **family**, but all he had at his death was one son.

Abraham is mentioned in **Hebrews 11**, and that chapter concludes in **Hebrews 11:39-40**, “And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

He looked for something better! He looked for Jesus Christ!

Transition: So that’s what the text tells us about Abraham. What about Christ?

- II. What does this passage tell us about **Christ**, the Seed of Abraham – in whom the promise was fulfilled? **2 Corinthians 1:20**, “...all the promises of God find their Yes [fulfillment] in him [Christ]”.

Although God’s promises in the Old Testament had an immediate fulfillment in the types and shadows of a physical nation of Israel and a physical king and a physical seed, all of these types and shadows point to Christ.

- There was a **Temple**, but now we as Christ’s body are called God’s Temple.
- There was a physical seed, but now we as God’s people are all called “children of Abraham” if we have the faith of Abraham. And Abraham’s seed.

A. Of course there was a physical fulfillment.

1. Abraham fathered Isaac and Isaac fathered Jacob, and Jacob fathered Judah, and the other 11 tribes.
 2. And they did inherit the land. There was a literal, historical fulfillment.
- B. But there is also a greater and ultimate fulfillment not in Israel, but in Christ. The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. In considering Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 13 and 15 where God reiterates the promise of a seed for Abraham, we have an apostolic commentary.

Galatians 3:16, “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.”

III. What does this passage tell us about **ourselves**, who are the children of Abraham by faith in Christ? The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. We are told in Genesis 12:

- **Galatians 3:7-9**, “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”
- **Galatians 3:29**, “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” What promise? The promise of Genesis 12:1-3! That there is another country and another family that we ought to live for!

Conclusion: So what does this mean to me?

1. It means I need to live by faith like Abraham. We cannot live according to this world for all it’s frills and bells and whistles. We are going to stand before God one day. Are we living for the family of Christ and the promised land? What is the promised land? It’s ultimately the kingdom that Christ is going to establish on this earth. We believe Christ is coming again to establish His kingdom.

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Romans 4:13, “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.” Abraham will inherit the full promise with all of us when Christ comes again. Are you living for Christ’s coming? Are you living for another country and another family?

2. It also means I need to evangelize the world. The mission of God was promised through Abraham. The salvation of the human race comes through only one Savior. We need to stand against pluralism. We say with Peter in **Acts 4:12**, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”