

## **Building on Biblical Foundations**

### **“Covenant Keeper”**

Karin Paparelli Peters

Genesis 15 / Pentecost Sunday

May 19, 2024

We continue our story in Genesis Chapter 15

SLIDES: Genesis 15:1-21

**1**After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

**2**And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

**3**And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

**4**And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

**5**And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

**6**And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

**7**And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

**8**And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

**9**And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

**10**And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

**11**And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

**12**And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

**13**And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

**14**And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

**15**And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

**16**But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

**17**And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces

**18** In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

**19**The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

**20**And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

**21**And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Last week we read about Abram rescuing Lot and refusing to be rewarded with the spoils of war. Abram's actions were a reflection of his character. This week we read of the Lord's response to Abram. In these verses the Lord re-affirms his promise to Abram, to make him a great nation. He seals this promise by making a covenant with Abram, but not just with Abram. This covenant is with Abram's descendants as well. This raises a few questions:

1. What is a covenant? How is it different from a promise?
2. Who are/were Abram's descendants? Who inherits this Covenant?
3. How does that transcend to us here and now?

### **First: What is a Covenant?**

A modern definition of Covenant is:

a solemn promise, a formal agreement, an alliance.

Biblically covenants represent the promise of God regarding a promise. It is the Lord's assurance that HE WILL do as he has said.

### **What did the Lord promise Abram?**

Let's review: In Chapter 12 verses 2-3

**2And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:**

**3And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**

The Lord promised:

1. to bring a great nation from Abram,
2. to bless him,
3. to make his name great,
4. to make him a blessing,
5. to bless those who bless him,
6. to curse those who curse him and
7. to bless all families of the earth through him.

Once again reminds Abram of these words. His words are true, they are reliable. And He seals this by making covenant with Abram.

### **Did the Lord keep his promises?**

1. As we look ahead in scripture, we see that yes, Abram brings forth a son, and that son becomes the father of Isaac, who becomes the father of Israel, who is the father of 12 sons – who are the 12 tribes of Israel.
2. Does he bless Abram? Yes, over and over.
3. Is his name great? Abraham is credited as the father of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims. And here we are more than 4000 years later still talking about Abraham. I'd say that his name is indeed great.
4. Was he a blessing? Did he bless others who knew him? Last week we saw how his household servants defeated armies to regain Lot and all of the people and possessions carried away from Sodom. All of those people were blessed by Abraham's actions.
5. Did the Lord bless those who bless Abraham? Yes – we see how he protected Sarai from the Pharaoh, when she obeyed Abram. He blessed Pharaoh when he recognized she was a married woman and he refrained from taking her as his wife. We will see how this favor continues through the generations that come after Abraham. . .even to this day.
6. Does the Lord curse those who curse Abraham? Yes. And we will also see how that plays out in modern times.

7. Have all families throughout the earth been blessed through Abraham? Yes. . . so it is through the bloodline of Abraham that Jesus – the savior of the entire world – came. And through Jesus all people, for all time, are blessed.

### **Second: Who Inherit the Promises of Abraham?**

We know that the Lord blessed the descendants of Abraham. First blessing the Nation of Israel, but later extending those who inherit the blessing to include all who become spiritual descendants of Abraham by placing their faith in Jesus. These are the ones Paul speaks of when he declares in Romans 3:22

**22 This righteousness is given through faith in[h] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,  
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

Jesus comes through the line of Abraham and all the world is blessed through the redemption Jesus offers. Those who give themselves wholly to Jesus become the true descendants of Abraham, and as such inherit the blessings that the Lord promised Abraham.

A little further Paul goes on to explain. . . Romans 3:28-30

**28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.  
29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,  
30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.**

We who are born of faith are the descendants of Abraham.

**Romans 4:16 -18 explains this mystery. . .**

**16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.**

**17 As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.”[c] He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.**

**18 -19 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”**

**Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.**

**20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,**

**21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.**

**22 This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”**

**23 The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone,**

**24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.**

**25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**

So we – those who trust in the Lord – are blessed. We inherit the blessings of Abraham. Further, the Lord through Jesus, establishes a NEW covenant, a promise that replaces the first covenant. He doesn't reject his first promise, the objects of that first promise reject him. So, rather than give up, the Lord actually expands the blessings of Abraham to those who walk as Abraham walked – in faith.

### **Hebrews 8:7-13**

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said[b]:

“The days are coming, declares the Lord,  
when I will make a new covenant  
with the people of Israel  
and with the people of Judah.

9 It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their ancestors  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,  
and I turned away from them,  
declares the Lord.

10 This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel  
after that time, declares the Lord.  
I will put my laws in their minds  
and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

11 No longer will they teach their neighbor,  
or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.

12 For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more.”

13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

### **Third: How does this transcend to us today?**

Today is Pentecost Sunday – a day that churches all over the world celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers.

Let's read of the account . . . **Acts 2:1-4**

**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.**

**2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.**

**3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.**

**4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues[a] as the Spirit enabled them.**

**Peter explained to the crowds that were gathered in Jerusalem that day what was happening:**

**Acts 2:16-21**

**16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel**

**17 “In the last days, God says,**

**I will pour out my Spirit on all people.**

**Your sons and daughters will prophesy,**

**your young men will see visions,**

**your old men will dream dreams.**

**18 Even on my servants, both men and women,**

**I will pour out my Spirit in those days,**

**and they will prophesy.**

**19 I will show wonders in the heavens above**

**and signs on the earth below,**

**blood and fire and billows of smoke.**

**20 The sun will be turned to darkness**

**and the moon to blood**

**before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.**

**21 And everyone who calls**

**on the name of the Lord will be saved.’[c]**

This was promised by the Lord. This was promised by Jesus. The Holy Spirit was given to the believers to accomplish the Lord's purpose on the earth. What is the Lord's purpose?

To reveal Himself to all. To rescue the lost. To restore sight to the blind. To enable the lame to leap. To cause the deaf to hear. To set captives free. To gather to himself those who belong to the Kingdom of God. And he chooses us – his faithful followers to be his messengers on earth. His hands, his feet, his voice, his embrace. We are to extend mercy, forgiveness, grace, justice, love, compassion and the ability to overcome every scheme of the devil by the POWER of the Holy Spirit.

We were never meant to do any of this on our own. We are to seek the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit in everything we do.

From one man of faith – Abraham – an entire world has indeed been blessed. His faith, his devotion, his commitment to the Lord paved the way for us today to be instruments of God's perfect plan.

Just as Joel prophesied, we are living in those days. . .the days where the Holy Spirit has been and is still being poured out.

And I say to you – just as Peter said to the crowd in Jerusalem: “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

**38 “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you [too] will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

**<sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”**

Jesus continues to offer an escape from the wrath that is to come.

The time draws near when there will be no more time. When the invitation will no longer be extended. A time is coming when Jesus will appear as the righteous judge, the King of the Universe, the Lord of All. On that day it will be too late to repent, too late to beg for forgiveness. On that day, those who belong to him will be separate from those who do not. There will be no faking it. He knows who are his.

Choose for yourself this day to be found hid in him.

Let's pray.