

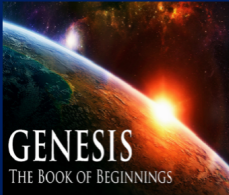
Genesis 054
A Promise is a Promise
Genesis 12:1-3
October 10, 2021
Dr. Andy Woods

Let us turn our Bibles, if we could, to Genesis 12:1. The title of our message this morning is "A Promise is a Promise." We have completed Genesis 1-11. Can you believe it? So we are completely finished with talking about four events: Creation, Fall, Flood, national dispersion. We are now resident experts and all of that. Amen.

A promise through all of those events has been traced. It is this promise of a coming Messiah. Beginning in Genesis 12 we begin to learn about the nation that will beget or bring forth this promise: the nation of Israel. The focus now moves away from four events to four people. Instead of Creation, Fall, Flood, and national dispersion, now it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The beginning of and the preservation of a very special nation called the nation of Israel, the only nation that has ever existed in human history that God Himself created.

Genesis 11:27–12:3
A New Nation

- I. A new record (Gen. 11:27a)
- II. A new family (Gen. 11:27b-29)
- III. A new crisis (Gen. 11:30)
- IV. A new journey (Gen. 11:31)
- V. A death (Gen. 11:32)
- VI. New promises (Gen. 12:1-3)



Isaiah 43:1 says that the nation was created directly—not indirectly through the Tower of Babel—but through the creative energy of God. As we begin to look at the beginning of the life of Abraham, we saw in our last time together a new record, a new family, a new crisis, a new journey, a death that takes us out of Genesis 11-12.

Here we begin to look at new promises. This nation would not exist without the promises of God. We read about those here in Genesis 12:1-3, the verses that we are going to look at this morning. Notice, if you will, Genesis 12:1:

"Now the Lord said to Abram" (Genesis 12:1).

That formula is going to be used seven times in the Book of Genesis to describe God's revelation to a man named Abram. Abram is blessed by God because he is receiving from God direct revelation.

The rest of the verse says:

*"Now the Lord said to Abram,
'Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house...' (Genesis 12:1).*

You will notice this expression here "go forth from," "go out of." The idea here is to separate. When a person gets saved through faith alone in Christ alone, and they begin to follow the leadership of Jesus Christ in the walk of progressive sanctification, one of the things you will see naturally taking place in your life is separation.

Second Corinthians 6:17 says:

"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

It is this idea that I am not going to laugh at the jokes I used to laugh at before. I am not going to hang with the crowd I used to hang with, other than evangelism. I am not going to allow their values to influence me. Sometimes it can be a lonely experience walking with the Lord. But it is natural, it is normal, and it is what the Lord uses to prepare us for greater things.

It is interesting that whenever you give something up, whenever the Lord asks you to give something up—a habit, anything that we are doing—I have discovered through personal discovery that God always will replace it with something better. I have noticed God is not so much in the business of saying, 'no,' as He is in the business of saying, 'better.' "I want to replace that thing, whatever it is you were holding on to, with something far greater and far better. But I cannot bless you, I cannot fill a cup that is full. I have to empty the cup first so I can put My living water in that cup."

It is hard for God to put things in our hands when our fists are clenched onto something and tightly grabbing something. The Lord will gently loosen our grip on things, and we start to hold on to the things of this world with a bit less grip than we did before. But that is all the work of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, and God has something greater and better for you.

So what is Abraham, or now his name is just Abram, to separate himself from? Three things: number one, his country, Ur of the Chaldeans, which was his place of security. It is his place of familiarity. It was his place of prosperity. The Lord says, "You are going to leave that now and you are going to follow Me. Number one, you are going to separate yourself from your own country. Number two, you are going to separate yourself from

your own relatives, from your kindred, from your fellow citizens. Then number three, you are going to separate yourself from your father's house, your household, your own family (Genesis 12:1).

Jesus, in the walk of discipleship, which is only for a believer, made the point that when you put the desires of your parents over the desires of Him for your life, you cannot be His disciple. He did not say that you cannot be a believer, but He said, "You just cannot be My disciple." Sometimes this walk of sanctification involves that, where you start to see conflicts between what the Lord is calling you to do and what your family wants you to do. You have to start making a decision. That is tough. It is never fun, but it is normal. It is natural in the walk of progressive sanctification.

This is what Abram here is experiencing. Where is he going? It is at the end of Genesis 12:1: *"To the land which I will show you."*

Notice He does not say, "We are going to Canaan." That is revealed in the prior chapter, but it is not revealed here. Abram probably wanted a roadmap. He wanted a Mapsco; he wanted Google Maps; he wanted to know where his destination was. God says, "Do not worry about that." You do not have to worry about the destination if you trust your guide.

We are an awful lot like that. We want to know where we are going, when things are going to happen, what is going to happen in this circumstance, or what is going to happen in that circumstance. We ask God for answers and God does not say anything. He says, "Trust me," which is hard for us because when you are first becoming familiar with the Lord, sometimes it is hard to trust Him. We are used to trusting ourselves.

But the truth of the matter is, if I am driving with a really good guide, and I did yesterday because I came back to IAH, Bush International, about 11 o'clock at night, and I flew into Houston, and I parked in a brand new place called the Parking Spot, which is huge. On the way out, I forgot to get my ticket to where my car was parked. We are getting on the little shuttle and the guy is taking tickets, and he says to me, "Where is your ticket?" I said, "I do not have one."

Now, the guy at that point could have made or broken me, but what he said is, "Do not worry, sir, we will find your car." He was the nicest guy. He said to me, "By the way, if you had another driver, he would not be so nice." So there we went, circling through this parking lot. It must have been a good 20 minutes with me sitting in the front, beeping my keys, looking for the headlights to go on. The good news is we found the car.

I trusted what was happening because I trusted this guy who was my driver. I said to him afterwards, "They should make you the president of this whole company." Then I actually said, "You are the kind of person I would love to marry my daughter one day. Now, you are a bit old for her right now. She is only 15, but if I was going to pick

someone to marry my daughter, you would be the guy." So I calmed down because I trusted him.

That is how the Lord is. If you trust Him, He is going to get you to your destination, it is just a matter of relaxing and calming down. God cannot lie. He calls us into that walk of faith. Hebrews 11:8 says:

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

That is how God works. If God gave you the destination, you would not really have to trust Him, would you? You would be trusting Google Maps or Mapsco, or you would be trusting your car keys as I was sort of doing last night. If God does not put us in circumstances like this, how can that faith muscle which we have already exercised to become believers in the first place? How could that muscle be developed?

God wants to develop that faith muscle, because it says in Hebrews 11:6:

"And without faith it is impossible to [be pleasing to] Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Muscles can get very flabby when they are not used. Muscle has to be put under pressure in order for it to develop correctly, to develop its full strength. If God has your life arranged in such a way that you can figure your way out of all of your problems, then how in the world is the faith muscle ever going to be developed? So He deliberately puts you into circumstances where you have to trust Him, where there is almost no way out. He will do this over and over in your life. Do not resist it. Do not get resentful towards it. It is a normal part of the walk of progressive sanctification, which is what Abraham is experiencing here.

Then we come to the very end of Genesis 12:1, and it says: *"To the land which I will show you."* Then what follows is Genesis 12:2-3, where He starts to give promises—eight promises.

The mistake in interpretation here is that people think that these promises are conditional. You need to learn the difference between a conditional promise and an unconditional promise. A conditional promise is one that indicates that you get blessed if you do something. There certainly are those in the Bible. The famous one is Proverbs 3:5-6, which says:

*"Trust the Lord with all your heart
And lean not on your own understanding.
In all ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

It is interesting when you counsel people and they are kind of upset with their lives, and they are saying, "My path is not being made straight by the Lord." My question is, "Have you done the first three conditions? Are you trusting Him, not with some of your heart, but with all of your heart? Are you leaning not on your own human intellect, but leaning on Him? Are you acknowledging Him, not in some of your ways, but all of your ways?" If you do A, and you do B, and you do C, then you get D.

The Bible certainly has within it promises which are of a conditional nature and a conditional variety. A lot of people read Genesis 12:1-3 as conditional. Abraham has to keep the conditions there in Genesis 12:1, and if he keeps the conditions in Genesis 12:1, then he gets Genesis 12:2-3.

This is the opening of a theological door that really needs to stay shut. It is the opening of the door into what is called Replacement theology, which is the idea that Augustine taught all the way back in the fourth century. Sadly, it is the dominant view in Christendom by way of denominational affiliation.

It is the idea that Abram was a good boy and he did what he was supposed to do, so he got the promises in Genesis 12:2-3. Then you ask the Replacement theologian, the idea that God is through with Israel, that God is through with the Jew, God has no purpose anymore for the nation of Israel. You ask them, "What about Israel today?" They say, "They broke their promise to God. They rejected their Messiah in the first century. So God clipped the cord on the nation of Israel." Replacement theology: Abram was a good boy and he kept the conditions. The problem is that later generations did not keep the conditions. So God cut the cord on the nation of Israel. Basic replacement theology.

What I want to show you is that this is an errant way of thinking right out of the gate. These are not conditional promises; these are unconditional promises, meaning that their fulfillment rests completely and totally on the shoulders of God. Abram really was not a very good boy all the time. His obedience is kind of like ours, partial at best. For example, he is told to leave his relatives. Did he do that? Well, sort of, but he took Lot his nephew with him (Genesis 11:31). He was told to leave his father's house. Did he do that? Well, sort of. He maybe got about a C plus maybe because he took Terah with him to Haran. (Genesis 11:31).

Stephen's speech in Acts 7 makes this very clear. Stephen, one of the first deacons in Christianity, Christendom, the beginning of the Church Age, gave a speech before the Jewish Sanhedrin in Acts 7. It is a marvelous speech. In fact, it was so good that he got himself stoned to death for speaking it. You know you are doing a good job when you are making people angry because God's Word does that. We should be making people angry, not because we are lewd, crude, rude, and obnoxious, but the nature of Scripture is such that it is an offense.

This is why Galatians 5:11, calls the gospel an offense. God designed it that way. So when you speak truth in love to people, do not expect the world to stand up and give you applause. God's Word, by its very nature, is divisive.

Stephen gave a speech and he goes all the way through Israel's history. It goes for 52, 53, 54 verses, or something in there. He basically says in that speech, weaving together Israel's history, that Israel is a nation of disobedience. "This disobedience culminated in the fact that you rejected your own Messiah not long ago." His speech starts with Abram. Stephen brings out in this speech that Abram's faith, the beginning of Israel's history, was partial. His obedience, I should say, was partial. This pattern of disobedience goes all the way back to Abram.

He says in Acts 7:2-4:

"And he [Stephen] said, 'Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and he said to him, "Leave your own country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you." Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living'" (Acts 7:2-4).

What is Stephen's point? Stephen's point is that Abram's obedience was about a C plus or a C minus. He left, but he did not do exactly what God said.

Now that actually becomes a very big deal, because if that is true, then the promises that God gave to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3, which we are going to look at in just a minute, have never lapsed. If, on the other hand, the promises are conditional and everything rides on Abram's obedience, then subsequent generations of disobedience lapse those promises. But what I am trying to communicate is that the promises are not conditional. They are unconditional. Abram was a good boy sometimes, but not other times, kind of like you and me.

This is all held out as a type, if you will, of our salvation. In fact, Abram disobeyed even the end of Genesis 12:1 to a land which I will show you. He went into the Promised Land, but later on in Genesis 12 there was a famine in the land, and he went into Egypt. God never said, "Leave the land."

So he went into the land; then he left the land; then he found himself in a situation in Egypt where the Pharaoh sexually wanted his wife Sarai. He basically asked, "Are you married to her or not? Because if you are married to her, I could kill you. Then I could have her for myself." So he started making up stories: "She is my sister," which was a partial truth. Genesis 20:12 indicates that Sarai was his half-sister.

By the way, the chart that I had up last time is probably not totally correct. I think it indicated that Sarai was his niece. That is the problem with internet charts. You grab it because it teaches a point, but then you did not look at all the fine details. So it is a good chart, but the niece part, I do not think is right, but that is another story.

The point of the matter is that his obedience here is partial. This is why God, at the height of Israel's disobedience, can say to them:

*"Thus says the Lord,
Who gives the sun by light by day
And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night...
'If this fixed order departs
From before Me,' declares the Lord,
'Then the offspring of Israel will cease
From being a nation before Me forever'" (Jeremiah 31:35-36).*

That statement was made at the height of Israel's disobedience when they were sacrificing their own children to satisfy the god of prosperity named Molech. There is no way that statement could be made if you want to get rid of Israel. "Don't aim your rockets and bombs and guns at Israel; aim them at the sun and the moon and the stars, because as long as that fixed order exists, Israel will always exist." There is no way God could ever make a statement like that if these promises given to Abram were conditional rather than unconditional.

Conditional is you do X, Y, and Z, and God does something in return (Proverbs 3:5-6). An unconditional promise is God is going to do it no matter what you do.

Now, God has made you as a Christian. Conditional promises in the walk of sanctification. An example, as we said before, would be Proverbs 3:5-6. But you should also know that He has made you unconditional promises. In other words, God is going to execute certain things in your life no matter what you do as a Christian. The only condition that is necessary is to become a Christian, which involves believing or trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is why one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible is 2 Timothy 2:11-13. Second Timothy 2:11 says: *"It is a trustworthy statement."* In other words, you can take this one to the bank. So what is the promise? Second Timothy 2:13:

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

There are an awful lot of things I can do as a Christian to mess up all kinds of things in my life, but those relate to the walk of progressive sanctification and temporal blessings. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, they cannot undo the initial promise that He has made to you, that if you believe in Him, if you believe in His Son, you have the gift of eternal life, and you are heaven bound because you are in the double grip of grace (John 10:27-29).

Nothing can take you out of those two hands. It would be one thing to be in the Son's hand, but that passage goes on and says that you are also in the Father's hand, and

you are basically locked in because that is an unconditional promise. You may make all kinds of bad decisions as a Christian that may derail aspects of your progressive growth, and there might be temporal consequences, but those do not affect your eternal security, because that promise is not conditional, but it is unconditional.

So as you are looking at this issue of conditional promises and unconditional promises concerning Israel, the thing to understand is that it is a prototype, if you will, a prefigurement, if you will, of our own salvation experience. David, in the Bible, made some bad choices. What did he do one day? Oh, just little things. Number one was adultery, number two was lying about it, and number three was murder to cover it up. So in David's life, you have some little sins, right? Lying, murder, and adultery.

David experienced all sorts of practical problems in his life because he moved into the flesh and made those bad choices. I do not even like the expression "bad choices." That sounds too psychological to me. He moved into sin. But those had nothing to do with his ultimate arrival into heaven one day—his ultimate arrival into glory one day—because those promises were not conditional but unconditional.

As Abram is moving out, he is going to make good choices, and he is going to make bad choices, which will bring either temporal blessings or temporal consequences. But they cannot erase Genesis 12:2-3, because those promises are unconditional. That is why, no matter how rebellious Israel became (and she became very rebellious), no matter how rebellious she is right now, you cannot clip Israel out of your eschatology or your End Times beliefs. God started to make promises to the patriarch Abram of an unconditional nature.

So here is the foundation of the nation of Israel, where God starts to make promises—eight in total. That is why we have titled this "A Promise is a Promise." One of the things that is very interesting is that God makes promises first, but later on, those promises are ratified into what is called a covenant. That will not happen until Genesis 15:18 where you will see these promises, which are reliable enough in and of themselves because they come from God, you will not see them taking on covenantal form until you get to Genesis 15.

This is the pattern of God. God did the exact same thing with Noah. He made promises to him. We know, in Genesis 6, that those are promises because God refers to the covenant as something future. It is not until Genesis 9 that the promises take on a covenantal dimension in what is called the Noahic Covenant.

The same reality is happening right here. A promise is a promise, but it is about to take on a new dimension called a covenant. See, Abram had two things. He did not just have promises from God, which would be enough, but he had a covenant, a formal contractual binding agreement of promises coming from God to Abram and his descendants. Those promises are one-way, because God put Abram to sleep before those promises were given (Genesis 15). There are not a lot of conditions you can fulfill when you are asleep, right? Unless snoring is one of the conditions.

That is very important to understand. If you understand that, it keeps you away from a lot of bad theology and it keeps you away from this idea that if I sin, I have to perpetually doubt my salvation. Most Christians as I speak, because they are so untaught on this, spend most of their Christian life wondering if they are Christians. It is a complete waste of your time to do that. If the promise of life and God giving it to you once you trust in Him is somehow on your shoulders to keep it, then you ought to worry. But the reality of the situation is when God made that promise to you of eternal life, He did not say, "Okay, you are on probation." You are not on probation.

Now, you can wreck your life, you can shipwreck your life, or you can do great things with your life, but it has nothing to do with the initial unconditional promise. That is why I highlight a lot of these things. A good sermon like this, educating people on this, resolves a lot of counseling issues. A lot of people need counseling, and the reason they need counseling is they are fearful that they lost their salvation. They want to come and talk to the pastor to somehow prove to them that they are Christians.

We can just end the counseling sessions right now, can't we? You are a Christian. Period. It is resolved. Just accept it and move on with your life. Do not spend your life wondering, "Am I saved or am I not saved?" You trusted in Christ. He has promised to give you the gift of life, which, by the way, is eternal. That promise is unconditional. Now move on into your progressive growth. You can do things that will bring temporal blessings in your progressive growth, and you can do things that will deactivate temporal blessings in your progressive growth. But it has nothing to do with your arrival into heaven one day.

With Abram, what are these promises? Eight of them. Here we go. Number one is the promise of land. We saw that in Genesis 12:1: *"To the land which I will show you."* The very first thing that God promised to Israel through the patriarch Abram was the promise of land.

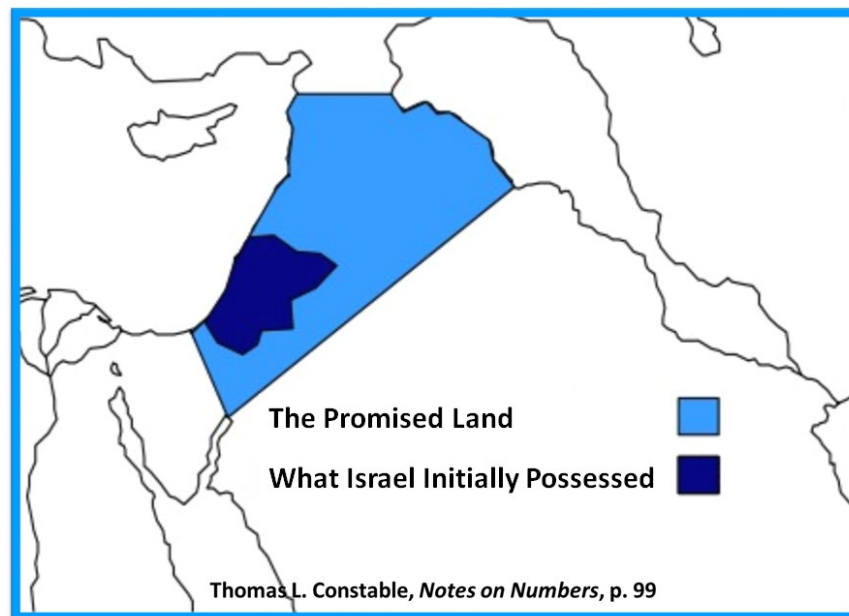
Drop down to Genesis 12:7. It says:

"The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land'" (Genesis 12:7).

The land is a big deal. When we get to Genesis 15:18-21 we learn that the land is going to be a track of real estate that stretches all the way from the Nile to the Euphrates—from modern-day Egypt to modern-day Iraq. That land belongs to Israel. Let me correct the statement. It does not belong to Israel; it belongs to God. It is the only piece of real estate on planet earth that God Himself claimed as His own, and He bequeathed it by way of unconditional gift to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Leviticus 25:23, as clearly as it can be said, says, "The land is Mine."

Now, obviously today and in history, in the darker area there, Israel is now occupying a small fraction of the land. But that does not change the promise. The day is going to

come in the Millennial Kingdom, when the nation of Israel will have all of that light blue area.



Everybody today is hung up on what they call the West Bank, which is a terrible term because the West Bank is really not west in Israel, it is in the east. So when you use the expression West Bank, you are using a politically loaded phrase that favors Jordan. I do not find the expression West Bank in the Bible. I find the expression Judea and Samaria. But okay, let us call it the West Bank.

Everybody is worried about the West Bank. Are you kidding me? Not only is Israel in the Millennial Kingdom going to occupy the West Bank, she is going to occupy the East Bank. Tell that to the Muslims and see how much they like that. Let us stop talking about the West Bank, let us talk about the East Bank and when you are going to give it up to Israel. Whoops, there is World War Three right there. But this is what your Bible teaches. This is something that God unconditionally gave to the patriarch Abram.

Promise number two is "I am going to make you a great nation." It says in Genesis 12:2:

"And I will make you a great nation" (Genesis 12:2).

Now we have, coming into existence, a brand new nation. Back in Genesis 10, you will recall, there are 70 nations that owe their heritage and roots to the Tower of Babel. Now God says, "I am making a 71st nation which will be formed independently from the Tower of Babel. The Tower of Babel took place in Genesis 11, and God is now making these promises in Genesis 12.

Why does God have to make a new nation? Because all of these other nations are corrupted from the Tower of Babel, and therefore are unqualified to bring His Messiah to the earth. So God now makes a new nation, a 71st nation, to be the channel of blessing to all of planet Earth. Deuteronomy 26:5 says: *"...there he became a great, mighty and populous nation."* This is the only nation in the history of mankind created directly by God Himself. There are the 70 nations (Genesis 10), and God says, "Let us add a 71st nation."

What else is Abram promised here? He is promised personal blessing. Look, if you will, at Genesis 12:2:

*"And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you..." (Genesis 12:2).*

Promise number three is that Abram was to be the recipient of personal blessing. What is that personal blessing? It is material and it is spiritual, both. How do we know it is material? Because we have Genesis 13:2 which says:

"Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold" (Genesis 13:2).

Well, how did Abram become very rich in livestock and silver and gold? It relates to Genesis 12:2 where God says, "I am going to personally bless you."

Not only was it material, but it was spiritual in nature. Seven times in the Book of Genesis it will say, "God said to Abram." God gave to Abram direct revelation from Him, God Himself. That is the place of blessing. "Beyond that, I am going to expand those blessings into physical things."

What else does it say here? This will take us to number four. God says, "Your name is going to be very great." Look, if you will, at Genesis 12:2:

*"And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great..." (Genesis 12:2).*

Look at the three great religions of the world—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (and obviously with Islam, I think it is a false religion). When you step back and you look at those three religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three great religions of the world—they are probably doing more than anyone else in vying for the hearts and minds of people. It is interesting that when you examine those three religious systems—obviously, I do not think Christianity is a religious system because Christianity is not a religion of works like Islam is—but when you look at those three religions, those three great religions, what you discover is that Abraham's name is revered in all three.

That is an outworking of what God said would happen. Everything that God says is going to happen because God cannot lie. The Scripture says that, *"it is impossible for God to lie,"* (Hebrews 6:18). So God says to Abram, your name is going to become very great.

It is interesting that when you go back to the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:4), they were trying to make a name for themselves, but they never did. The only name I know of coming out of the Tower of Babel is Nimrod, and the meaning of his name is not even great. It means "rebellion" or "revolt" in Hebrew. They were trying to make a name for themselves. They were trying to make a reputation for themselves, and yet they made no name or reputation for themselves. The name or reputation that God bestowed on someone was through His unconditional promises.

By way of application, I would say this: Quit trying to make yourself popular. Quit trying to make yourself famous. If God wants to make you famous, let Him do it and let it be a pleasant surprise. Stop acting as if the Holy Trinity consists of me, myself, and I. Stop pursuing something that only God can give. Instead, submit to the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ by way of progressive sanctification, and say to the Lord, "Not my will be done, but Thy will be done." You might be surprised at some of the things God starts to do in your life.

This takes us to number five. We have land, a great nation, personal blessing, and a great name. Then He says here:

*"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" (Genesis 12:2).*

At the end of Genesis 12:2 God blessed Abram so that he in turn would be a blessing to somebody else. My goodness, has that not happened? In fact, in Zechariah 8:23 says:

""In those days [the Millennial Kingdom] ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'"" (Zechariah 8:23).

God says, "Abram, I am going to bless you. But the blessing is not just for you, it is for others." Now, it is not just Abram that has been blessed. Do you know that you have been blessed as a Christian? Ephesians 1:3 says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed. us..." (Ephesians 1:3).

In other words, I do not have to crawl to God and say, "Bless me, Lord." God says, "The bank accounts are already maxed out."

"...who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3).

We do not give to get blessed. Do we understand that? A lot of churches teach that you give to get blessed. Nonsense. We give because we are blessed. When God blessed you, He did not just have you in mind. He had all of the people in mind that your life would be blessed through. You might have a talent in something. You might have resources above and beyond what you need. You might have a wonderful career. You might have this or that, and you say, "Lord, thank You for blessing me." The Lord says, "Did I mention the fact that that blessing is not just for you? I want to bless others through you."

That is a completely different way of looking at possessions. It is a completely different way of looking at finance. It is a completely different way of looking at stewardship. It is a completely different way of looking at the use of spiritual gifts.

This congregation here is very gifted and talented in all kinds of different areas. Look at Renee here leading, playing music. I cannot do that. If you want me to do it, I will empty the place out really fast, even though my own mother was a piano teacher, which shows you how slow I am in music. I can do a few clunks here and there, but nothing like she can do.

How come she has that gift and I do not? Because God wanted to bless you through her. That is why he gave it to her. Whatever your area of gifting is, God gifted you because He wants you to be a blessing to someone else. It is not all about me and all about the talents I have. It is about what God wants to do, not to you, but through you.

This is the pattern of God. This is how God works. This is what God said to Abram at the very beginning of the nation of Israel. He says, "Look, I am going to bless you, but it is not just for you. There are going to be spillover effects to other people." We get more of a description of that in Genesis 12:3.

By the way, be careful about something. Be careful about asking God to bless you, because the moment God has blessed you (and, by the way, Ephesians 1:3 says that you have already been blessed in Christ Jesus), but the moment God puts His hand of blessing on you is the moment you have an adversary. The thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The thief does not pick on people who have no financial blessing. To some extent they do, but the real target is the wealthy. The target of the thief is the wealthy. The target of the thief is someone who has something to steal. That would be you, because you are rich in Christ Jesus.

That is why, in the very same book that says that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, that same book a few chapters later, says to put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6). Why do you have to put on the full armor of God? Because now Satan is targeting your life. Why is Satan targeting your life?

Because you are rich and you are a threat and he has something in your life he wants to derail, to steal. He knows that if you start to walk in your blessings, you are going to be a blessing to other people. Satan does not like that, so he will begin to target your life.

The moment God said this about Abram is the moment Abram became a target for Satan himself. So God, in Genesis 12:3, has to give two more promises by way of national protection. When you look at what the Hebrews have gone through historically, a lot of them say, "Lord, I wish You would bless somebody else for a while." They are the nation that went into worldwide dispersion, the nation that survived the Holocaust, where a third of them died. I am sure many of them are thinking, "Lord, it is great to be blessed, but could You please bless somebody else? Because I am tired of being targeted and attacked."

It is the same with your blessings in the Church Age. If you are experiencing spiritual warfare in your life, if you are experiencing resistance from the satanic realm, that is because you are rich and now you have an automatic enemy. So put on the full armor of God.

Because Abram is in this place of blessing, God says, "Here are two more, and you are going to really need these two." So what are they? The first one is a blessing to bless others, because as you go into Genesis 12:3, it says:

"And I will bless those who bless you..." (Genesis 12:3).

"You are going to need protection, so the one that blesses you, I in turn am going to bless. You find this repeated in Balaam's oracles in Numbers 24:9, where it says:

"Blessed is everyone that blesses you" (Numbers 24:9).

A lot of people try to figure out why the United States of America has been blessed the way it has. Is it our economy? Is it our wonderful leadership? What is it that has kept the hand of God, of blessing on the United States of America for all of these years?

By the way, if you do not think America has been blessed, why does the whole world want to come here? You can tell a nation is blessed simply by removing the walls or the gates around the nation. Do more people run in or do they run out? You lift the walls around America, and we do not even have walls around America, but let us pretend there are walls. If you lift the walls around the United States, everybody wants to come in.

What would happen if you did that in Cuba, Iran, Saudi Arabia? There is obviously something very special, and there has always been something very obviously unique about the United States of America, because the whole world wants to come here, either legally or illegally. However they are trying to do it, they are trying to get here.

What is it about here that is so special? Everybody is trying to figure that out. It is called American exceptionalism, meaning not that America is somehow superior to everyone else, but American exceptionalism means that America is the exception to the rule. Here we are over 200 years later, functioning under the exact same Declaration and Constitution that we started.

France's constitution in that time has probably changed at least around eight times, maybe more. So obviously what is happening in the United States is exceptional, meaning it is the exception to the rule. People will go on and on explaining why this is so.

To be frank with you, I had all of the wrong answers until I was invited by a fellow prophecy speaker, August Rosado, to speak at his church in Rhode Island. In between sessions, he took me to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, which was the first synagogue built in the United States of America. In fact, you can go there and tour it today. It is set up like a museum.

In that particular museum is a letter from George Washington, who visited that congregation and wrote to them August 18th, 1790, after he had visited that congregation on that same day. It is a famous letter. In fact, this letter has been quoted in a number of Supreme Court cases, but everybody quotes the wrong part of it. They do not quote the part of it that tells you why America has been blessed.

Look at what George Washington says here in 1790:

"I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport...the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance...May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while every one—" ¹

Here George Washington is quoting the Bible. In fact, when he quotes the Bible, I think he is quoting the Book of Micah. Why doesn't he say the Book of Micah? Well, because it would be redundant. Everybody knew what part of the Bible he was quoting. That is how scripturally literate that population was.

"...while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid." ²

In other words, George Washington, the federal head of the United States of America, said to the Jewish people, "You can worship as you want in the United States. We are

¹ George Washington's Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, August 18, 1790.

² Ibid.

not going to harass you. We are not going to illegalize what you are doing. We are not going to throw you in jail, because America is about sitting 'in safety under your own vine and fig tree, and none shall make him afraid.'"

You have to understand what the Jewish people went through historically when they were kicked out of their homeland into worldwide dispersion in A.D. 70. You can document it, historically. Everywhere they went they were persecuted. George Washington says, "It will not be that way in the United States."

I believe that tGod acts through federal heads. George Washington was our acting federal head, the father of our nation. He blessed Israel, the Jewish people, and God in turn, put His hand down from heaven and blessed the United States of America from sea to shining sea.

That is why I am eternally grateful to August Rosado, because he took me to see this, and it was not until I actually saw it that I finally figured out why America is exceptional among the nations of the earth. It is an outworking of what God promised to the patriarch, Abram. "Abram, you are going to be attacked and you are going to be blessed by people. I want you to know at the very front end that whoever blesses you is going to be blessed in return."

But then God says something else. This takes us to number seven: Everyone who curses you I will curse.

Genesis 12:3 says:

*"And I bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse..." (Genesis 12:3).*

In Balaam's oracles, Numbers 24:9, it says:

"And cursed is everyone who curses you" (Numbers 24:9).

This is in reference to Israel. In fact, we are just starting the Book of Zechariah on Wednesday nights, which I would encourage you to join with us here in the building or online. In Zechariah 2:8 it says:

*"...for he who touches you [Israel], touches the apple of His eye"
(Zechariah 2:8).*

I would understand that as the pupil of God. When you indiscriminately come against Israel through antisemitism, which is hatred for the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is almost as if you take your finger and jam it into the eyeball of God, and you are daring Him to act.

It does not show up in English, but the Hebrew text here is absolutely fascinating: *"I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you"* (Genesis 12:3). There is a word for "curse" ("kalal," [קָלַל]): *"And the one who curses ("kalal," [קָלַל]) you I will curse ("aor," [אָרַר])"* (Genesis 12:3).

Different words. The first word means "to treat lightly." You do not even have to overtly persecute Israel. You just have to come under the cursings of God. You just have to treat them lightly with less than they deserve. But the second word is much stronger. In other words, a light curse to Israel brings a heavy curse from God to the one that cursed Israel. The English will not reveal that to you, but a knowledge of Hebrew and the original languages does.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum on this verse, says:

"The first word for curse is 'kalal,' which means 'to treat lightly,' 'to hold in contempt,' or 'to curse.' To merely treat Abram and the Jews lightly is to incur the curse of God. The second word for curse used in this phrase (him that curses you I will curse) is 'aor,' from the Hebrew root 'arah,' which means 'to impose a barrier,' 'to ban.' This is a much stronger word for curse than the first one in the phrase...Therefore, even a light curse against Abram or against the Jews will bring a heavier curse from God."³

How literally do we take this: The one who curses you I will curse? Well, in the Book of Exodus, the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea. Were they not? Why did God drown the Egyptian army in the Red Sea? He could have opened up the desert, and they all could have fallen into the desert or into the ravine. He did that in Numbers. Why not send a tornado or hurricane? The answer is in Exodus 1. The Egyptians were drowning the Jews in the Nile. God says, "You drown My people, I drown you." It is very literal, isn't it?

Have you ever asked yourself the question, why is it that in plague number ten in the Book of Exodus that God killed the firstborn? That is the plague that finally broke Pharaoh's will, and he allowed the children of Israel to go. Why did God do that? Why did he kill the firstborn all over Egypt? You will find the answer in Exodus 4:22, where God calls Israel His firstborn son. "You come against my firstborn son, Egypt, and I am coming against your firstborn son." It is very literal.

Why is it that in the Book of Esther, Haman was hung on the very identical gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai? Because of Genesis 12:3: "the one who curses you I will curse." It is in kind. It is in return. In fact, the curse coming to you is worse than the curse you had originally designed.

³ Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 242.

When you start to understand this, human history starts to make a lot of sense because every nation that has ever come against Israel, even though at one time they were a worldwide power, is now on the ash heap of human history. Egypt at one time was a world power, and they brought the nation into captivity for 430 years, and they shrank as a world power.

You can go right down the list. The Assyrians came against the Northern Kingdom in 722, so God shrank the Assyrians as a world power. The same with Babylon, the same with Medo-Persia, the same with Greece, the same with Rome. How interesting is it that Rome, at the time of A.D. 70, was a worldwide power? Latin was the dominant language of the world under Rome. They came against Israel in A.D. 70, and here we are 2,000 years later, and Rome is gone. Latin is a dead language. Israel still exists and Hebrew is a living language.

It is absolutely fascinating to study this out. Modern day nations, same thing. Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany, the Third Reich was supposed to last a thousand years. He brought in the Holocaust and it was destroyed. We can think of the British Empire, what was the saying? That the sun never sets on the crown. The British Empire, historically (you can study it) came against Israel, and almost to the exact day that they started to make decisions against Israel is the moment God started to shrink their influence.

The truth of the matter is, folks, I do not stay up at night spending a lot of time wondering what is going to happen to the nation of Israel. Israel is going to do just fine. She has a covenant from God. What I am concerned with is the United States of America. It absolutely terrifies me. When politicians look at the Middle East and treat it like it is the art of the deal and treat it as if it is just another purchase of a hotel and another real estate deal, that scares the daylights out of me.

I have to be honest with you, it scares the daylights out of me when "The Squad," as our former president called them, keeps trying to change legislation to take away American funding for Israel's Iron Dome, which, as you can see from the map, they obviously need for protection because those green areas are Islamic countries. That little red dot is Israel.

When the House of Representatives on their Twitter feeds make one anti-Semitic statement after another, you wonder how long is God going to put up with this? What is the saying? Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it. It just seems to me that we are moving in the same direction as every other nation that has treated the Jews with light contempt, with heavy contempt. A promise is a promise here.

People say, "Well, Pastor, how do we vote biblically? How do we do that?" Here is one way to do it: you never support anybody, Republican or Democrat (and I can name them on both sides) that has any condemnatory word to say about Israel. In fact, there was a church in my seminary days in the Dallas area that brought in a missionary speaker that basically made the point from the pulpit that Israel in her modern existence

is not Isaac, but Ishmael. What they were saying is that Israel is a Zionist conspiracy—it is a work of man, and it has nothing to do with God.

Believe it or not, I can put up with a lot in a church. One of the reasons I became a pastor is rather than listen to clean up someone else's mess, I could at least make my own mess. There were a lot of messes going on, but when they said that, I said to my wife, "That is it. We cannot go here. We cannot support this with our presence and our prayers and our regular financial giving, because they have just crossed a line by saying this." So you support churches, you support people, you support political candidates—I don't care if they are running for dogcatcher—on what they think about this, because what they think about this will determine the direction of your country. Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it.

Fortunately, the promises go on, and we will end with this one. The last promise, which takes us to number eight, is this:

"...And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Number eight, "Abram, I am going to bless all of planet earth through you. You will be a channel of blessing to the whole world." Blessed to be a blessing.

Isaiah 42:6 calls the nation of Israel a light to the nations. Isaiah 49:6 says:

*"I will also make You a light of the nations,
So that My salvation may reach the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).*

The truth of the matter is, three of the greatest blessings you can ever have, came through Israel to the world. Blessing number one is this book, the Bible. Without God's work, through the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we would not have this book because every single writer of this book was not a Presbyterian or a Methodist or a Baptist—they were Jewish to the core. The only one they even debate anymore is Luke, who arguably was Gentile. But Arnold Fruchtenbaum, in his new Acts commentary, gives evidence that even Luke was Jewish. Romans 3:2 says that Israel has been entrusted with the very oracles of God.

Blessing number two is the Savior, who was absolutely Jewish. He was not even a Baptist. Now those are fighting words in Texas. He was Jewish absolutely to the core. In John 4:22, to the Samaritan woman (a different nationality), He says that salvation is of the Jews. In Romans 9:5, speaking of the blessings to Israel, Paul says: *"...and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh."* Look at the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 and you will see that He is Jewish. Therefore, we are starting to learn that it is through this special nation that is going to be fulfilled (Genesis 3:15).

By the way, folks, Israel is the gift that keeps on giving. Because if I were a Replacement theologian, I would basically tell you that, "Yes, God has blessed the

world through Israel, but it is all done. The church has taken Israel's place. We have the Scripture, we have the Savior. Thank you Israel, but we have got it from here." Most Christians, by way of denominational affiliation, believe that.

That is why when you take a trip to Israel, you need to go with the right tour guide. Because if you are learning from a Replacement theologian, he is going to talk about Israel in the past all the time. "This is where this happened, and this is where that happened." But if you go with the right person, he is going to talk to you about the past of Israel and the future of Israel. "This is where the temple is going to be built one day. This is where Jesus is going to rule the entire world one day." It is a different perspective, isn't it?

The third blessing is the Kingdom, which Jesus will orchestrate from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). In fact, in that day, the nations of the earth will not go to Washington, D.C. to worship the King. Thank God for that. They will go to Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16-18). Satan hates Jerusalem. That is why, when he is let loose out of the abyss after a thousand years, he wages an attack on Jerusalem.

What a nation! What a start with these eight promises. You know this idea "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you," there is a descendant of Abram you need to bless. If you bless Him by trusting in Him, you will be blessed. In return, you will have the gift of eternal life. If you curse Him by not believing in Him, then you will be cursed. You will be headed to a Christ-less eternity. What a segue into the gospel.

This principle works out even in our personal salvation. Through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension 2,000 years ago, Jesus bridged the gap between sinful man and a holy God. He says, "I want you not to trust in yourselves for your salvation; but I want you to trust in Me." You can do this right now and receive the blessing of eternal life.