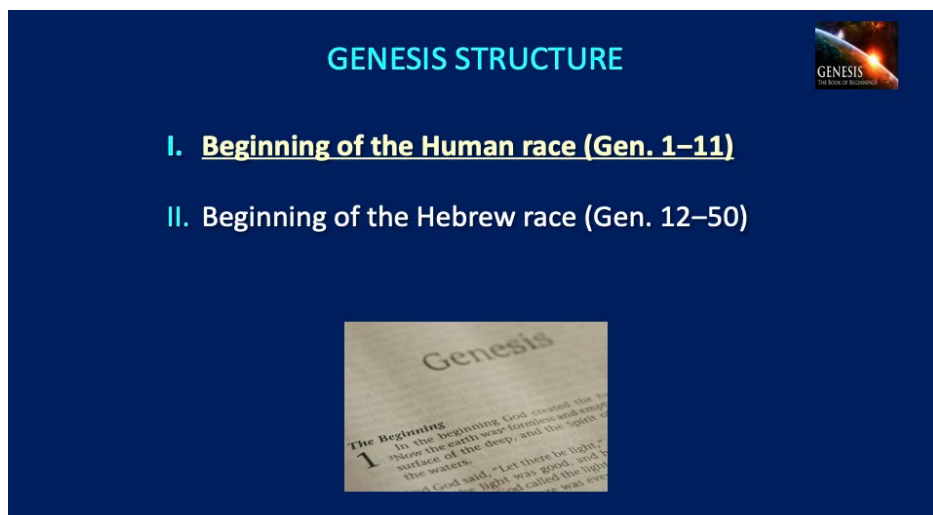


Genesis 055
A Worshipful Lifestyle
Genesis 12:4-9
October 24, 2021
Dr. Andy Woods

Good morning, everybody. Let's take our Bibles and open them to Genesis 12:4-9, looking, Lord willing, at Genesis 12:4-9 this morning. The title of our message this morning is "A Worshipful Lifestyle." Worship is more than just half an hour on Sunday—it is to be a lifestyle. We will see that this morning as we continue our verse-by-verse study in the Book of Genesis.

Here we are in the Book of Genesis, continuing on—finishing, believe it or not, Genesis 1-11. It only took fifty-five lessons to do that.



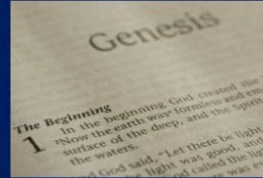
You will recall that Genesis 1-11 is about four events: Creation, Fall, Flood, and national dispersion. What is being traced as you move through that section is the lineage of a promise that God made immediately following the Fall. He promised that there would come one from the seed of the woman who would one day crush the serpent's head and set the order back to God's original design before man fell. Of course, we know that that coming one is Jesus Christ.

GENESIS STRUCTURE



I. Genesis 1-11 (four events)

- A. Creation (1-2)
- B. Fall (3-5)
- C. Flood (6-9)
- D. National dispersion (10-11)



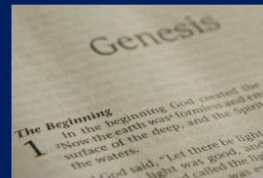
Then we moved into Genesis 12-50, where we now learn of a very special nation, a nation that is unique as far as the nations of the earth are concerned—a special nation that was created to mediate that Messianic blessing to humanity.

GENESIS STRUCTURE



II. Genesis 12-50 (four people)

- A. Abraham (12:1–25:11)
- B. Isaac (25:12–26:35)
- C. Jacob (27–36)
- D. Joseph (37–50)



That nation, of course, is the nation of Israel. So what we have now in Genesis 12-50 is a discussion not on four events any longer, but on four people: number one, Abraham; number two, Isaac; number three, Jacob; and number four, Joseph. We are learning how that nation was formed and how it was supernaturally protected by God. Without that nation, we would not have the Messiah, Jesus Christ, because it was God's intention to bring the Messiah to the world through the nation of Israel.

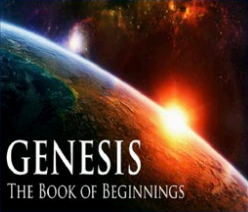
That is why I so appreciate what the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 43:1:

"But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel,..." (Isaiah 43:1).

Israel, as we said before, is very different from any other nation. A lot of people say, "Oh, Israel is just one of many nations. It is not much of a big deal." But the truth of the matter is that Israel is a big deal because it is the only nation directly created by God. Every other nation, as we have studied, owes its corrupted heritage to the Tower of Babel back in Genesis 11, while the nation of Israel begins with a man who receives promises from God. The man's name, at this point, is not Abraham. It is Abram. God is destined to change his name later on in the Genesis story.

Genesis 11:27–12:3
A New Nation

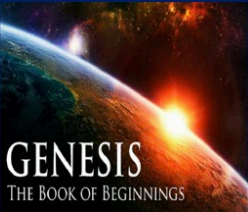
- I. A new record (Gen. 11:27a)
- II. A new family (Gen. 11:27b-29)
- III. A new crisis (Gen. 11:30)
- IV. A new journey (Gen. 11:31)
- V. A death (Gen. 11:32)
- VI. New promises (Gen. 12:1-3)**



The nation of Israel all begins with this man, Abram. Abram was given tremendous promises right out of the gate. You cannot have a special nation of God without promises. Those promises are articulated in Genesis 12:1-3.

VI. 8 New Promises
Genesis 12:1-3

- A. Land (Gen. 12:1b)
- B. Great nation (Gen. 12:2a)
- C. Personal blessing (Gen. 12:2b)
- D. Great name (Gen. 12:2c)
- E. Blessing to others (Gen. 12:2d)
- F. Blessing to blessers (Gen. 12:3a)
- G. Cursing to cursers (Gen. 12:3b)
- H. Blessing to the world (Gen. 12:3c)



By my count, there are eight promises in Genesis 12:1-3. We worked our way through those in the last session that I had with you. What you are going to see as you read through this is that when God makes a promise, it is a big deal. It is so tempting just to read over Genesis 12:1-3 and say, "Okay, let's move on in the story." But if you do that, you miss the point of the story. The point of the story is how God enforces His promises.

Even in this chapter, Genesis 12 itself, we are going to see God moving history so that three of these promises can be fulfilled. God promised Abraham land. We are going to see a lot about that in Genesis 12. God promised Abraham personal blessing. We are going to see an awful lot about that in Genesis 12. God even promised to the patriarch Abraham, "I will curse those who curse you" (Genesis 12:3, paraphrase). My goodness, is that going to happen right here in Genesis 12.

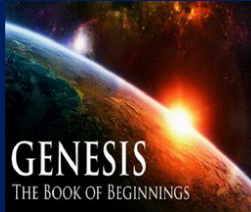
God says what He means and means what He says, and foolish is the man or the woman who does not take God at His word, because God cannot lie. Hebrews 6:18 says,

"...it is impossible for God to lie,..." (Hebrews 6:18).

When God says something, He starts to work in history to act on what He initially promised. In fact, that is the story of the rest of the Bible, if you want a summary of it: God keeping His word. We do not even have to get to the rest of the Bible to see that happening. We start to see it happening right here in Genesis 12. I have decided to outline the chapter as follows.

Genesis 12:4-20
Abraham's Early Journeys

- I. From Haran to Canaan (Gen. 12:4-5)
- II. In Canaan (Gen. 12:6-9)
- III. In Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20)



I have outlined it by geography, because there are three geographical movements here from the patriarch Abram as he is now moving into his early journeys. He has already been called from Ur of the Chaldeans, and he has gone up north to a place called Haran. Genesis 12:4-5 is the geographical movement from Haran back down into the land of promise. Then we will get to Genesis 12:6-9, where we have information about what Abraham did in the land of promise, Genesis 12:6-9.

Then Genesis 12:10-20 is God taking Abraham and saying, "Okay, it is time to grow up." Do we all know that God loves us too much to not let us get away with too much? He wants us to mature. Abram makes a series of really bad decisions. Can you all relate to that? I can. His faith at this point, although it is in existence, is in a state of infancy. And Abram has to learn to live based on the promises of God and not on the basis of manipulation and scheming and human energy. That is a lesson we all have to

learn, by the way, as God's people. Boy, does Abram learn that lesson in Genesis 12:10-20 in his sojourn down into Egypt.

So anyway, that is the lay of the land of Genesis 12. I obviously do not think we can get through all of this today, but let's see how far we can get. Notice Genesis 12:4-5. It says,

"So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him...." (Genesis 12:4).

So Abram now is taking a baby step of faith. He is doing what God said. The promises that God has made to Abram, as we have tried to argue, and which I think will become very clear, particularly in Genesis 12, are not conditional promises. It is not the kind of thing where God says, "Okay, Abram, I am going to do 'x' if you do 'y.'" The promises are there. The promises are unconditional. The promises will be fulfilled for God's new nation, the nation of Israel. "But Abram, if you want your life to be blessed by My unconditional program, then you need to cooperate with Me."

It is the same in your life. God, the moment you trusted Christ as your Savior, made you certain promises that cannot be vitiated. You have your security. You have eternal security. You are fast tracked on the way to glory. That is a done deal that is given to you by grace. It cannot be erased. However, if you want your life as a Christian to count in the here and now, if you want your life to be used for eternal purposes, God is going to ask you—in fact, He is going to command you—to take baby steps of faith.

He is going to say to you, "I cannot use you as long as your faith is in this infant state." It is wonderful that the infant faith is there, because that guarantees you eternity, and your promises of salvation are there. But God wants us to mature. He wants us to grow up. You cannot grow up unless you are willing to continue to walk with God by faith. The continuance of walking with God by faith does not make you somehow more of a Christian. You already are a Christian. It just makes you a usable Christian, a vessel in the Master's hands that He can use for His purposes.

Those are the stages of growth that Abram is now in. It is like in John 6:9 when that lad takes his five loaves and two fish—that is all he had at the time—and he deposits those into the hands of Jesus Christ. Of course, we know the end of that story. We know what Jesus did with that tiny step of obedience—how He multiplied it and fed the masses just with a few five loaves and two fish.

I often wonder, "What if that lad had just held on tightly to what he had and not shared it with the Lord?" Maybe the Lord could have found somebody else. But I have a tendency to think that that whole miracle would have been different. It would have been done differently. Perhaps the numbers would have been different. Yet it happened the way it happened because Jesus invited a young person to step out in faith: "Give Me what you have." And what a wonderful end to the story that is.

Abram has to do this at this point. He has to start taking some steps. He has a wonderful future, and he has a wonderful inheritance. But God has more for him than

that. He wants to make this man usable. So God said, "Leave Ur of the Chaldeans and head to Haran," and that is where Abraham was in Genesis 12.

It is interesting that when you look at the second half of Genesis 12:4 it says,

"...Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran" (Genesis 12:4).

Abram was not exactly a spring chicken, so to speak. I find this to be very interesting, because God oftentimes takes people at their state of decline, at their state of weakness. Here the weakness would be becoming older. "God, why didn't You call me in my twenties? All of a sudden You are calling me when I am in my seventies?" The truth of the matter is that God calls us many times in our state of weakness because that is when we are usable.

I think of John in the Book of Revelation, who received his greatest revelation from God (what we call the Book of Revelation) at the age of probably ninety or ninety-five. I think of Daniel in the lion's den, Daniel 6. You have seen all the pictures. There is Daniel in the lion's den. He looks rather like Arnold Schwarzenegger, and his muscles are bulging. Yet when you actually study that biblically, it could not be further from the truth, because Daniel's age is given throughout the Book of Daniel. When Daniel was thrown in the lion's den, he was in his late eighties.

He was in a state of weakness. He was in a state of infirmity. And the story of the Book of Daniel is how God took a man at his weakest point, just like John, and used him. The problem with God calling us in the point of our strength is that we think we can do the work of God through our own power. And God has to wait a little while till we start to decline, get over the hill, and start to have some problems. Then God calls us and we say, "Well, Lord, why didn't You call me earlier? It would have been easier."

And God says, "Well, if I had called you earlier, at the point of your strength, you would have thought you had everything figured out. But now that you know that you are weak, you have to depend upon Me." So is anybody here having struggles in their life—having problems? Are you at a point in weakness? That is the point in which God will start to use you.

In fact, Paul the Apostle, in 2 Corinthians 12:10, says something that totally defies the world's way of thinking. He says,

"...for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

That is why Paul says in that verse,

"Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Paul would say, "I am being weakened, Lord, by circumstances, but I am smiling from ear to ear because I now know that I am in a place where You can actually use me."



This is the pattern that we see here with this man Abram. So Abram has left Ur of the Chaldeans, and he has walked by faith and gone up north to a place called Haran. As you look at Genesis 12:5, you start to see a description of Abram's family. Genesis 12:5 says,

"Abram took Sarai his wife [her name had not been changed yet] and Lot his nephew,..." (Genesis 12:5).

Boy, isn't Abram really obeying God? Well, not quite. It is partial obedience. The reason I say it is partial obedience, concerning Abram's bringing Lot with him, is that back in Genesis 12:1 God was very clear that Abram was to separate himself from his own relatives. Now, he did it a little, but he did not do it completely. He brought Lot with him.

This is why we identify with Abram the way we do. Sometimes our obedience unto the Lord is about a C plus. And this is why God has to put Abram through different tests and different trials and different conditions to lead him to a place of perfect obedience.

By the way, perfect obedience will be achieved in Abraham's life in Genesis 22, when he is called to sacrifice—or almost sacrifice, I should say—Isaac, whom he had waited on and whom the Lord had miraculously brought into Abraham's life. Now, in Genesis 22, God says to Abraham, "I want you to kill Isaac." Abraham was willing to do it because his faith had been brought to a point of maturity.

In Genesis 12, Abram's faith is obviously not mature yet. He is still saved. He is still heaven-bound. He is justified before God, we believe. But there are issues of growth and maturity that have to be brought forth. This partial obedience of Abram is a dominant theme in Genesis 12, and it is a dominant theme in the whole Abraham story in the Book of Genesis.

It is also a dominant theme in your life because God is working the exact same way in your life. He keeps putting you into circumstances where the faith muscle that is already in you has to be developed so that it can grow properly. God has a great purpose for

your life—God has a great calling on your life—but it cannot be executed the way God wants it executed until the faith muscle and the obedience muscle start to develop.

The interesting thing about lifting weights is that you start to use muscles that you did not even know you had, and you are so sore the day after in muscles that you did not even think existed in your body. It is just amazing. It is unbelievable. Muscles, when they are not used, just atrophy.

Why would it be any different in this area of faith and obedience? If that is not actively part of your life, it is just going to get flabby and it is just going to atrophy. God says, "I have too big of a plan for your life for that to happen. So let Me put you into some circumstances where you have to trust Me at the point of your weakness."

We continue on in Genesis 12:5, and it says there towards the end of the verse, as Abram, Sarai, and Lot are leaving Haran towards Canaan,

"...and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran,..." (Genesis 12:5).

You will notice that Abram is growing in possessions. Why is that a big deal? Because at the beginning of Genesis 12, in Genesis 12:2, God said to Abraham,

"...I will bless you,..." (Genesis 12:2).

The fact that Abram is growing in terms of possessions is no great surprise, because that is what God said would happen. God means what He says and says what He means. And Abram does not just grow in possessions as he is leaving Haran and going to Canaan. He is not just growing in possessions, but he is also growing in persons. Do you see that there in Genesis 12:5?

"...and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran,..." (Genesis 12:5).

So what person or persons did Abraham acquire in Haran? One of them is named Eliezer of Damascus. You will find a reference to him in Genesis 15:2. He is going to become a big deal in Genesis 15, because God is going to say to Abram, who at that time will still be childless, "I am going to multiply your seed." Abram is going to have a weakness in faith, and say, "Well, the seed, or the child, is obviously not going to be born to myself and my wife, given our old age. So obviously, the promise is going to be fulfilled through Eliezer of Damascus."

God, in Genesis 15, is going to be very clear. He is going to say "No," as strong as it can be said, "the promise is not going to be fulfilled through Eliezer of Damascus, a common servant in your household, but through your body and your wife's body. Isaac is going to be born." So you might wonder, "Well, where did this Eliezer of Damascus come from?" He came from Abram's trip up north to Haran.

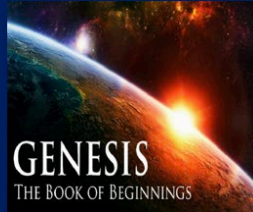
Now Abram is moving from Haran to the land of Canaan. You look at the very end of Genesis 12:5 and it says,

"...thus they came to the land of Canaan" (Genesis 12:5).

Abram is now moving from Haran to a land he did not really know much about—this land of Canaan, which is going to become the promised land of Israel. That is the first geographical movement, Genesis 12:4-5: from Haran to Canaan. Now we pick up the story, Genesis 12:6-9, concerning what is going to happen to the patriarch Abram in the land of Canaan.

II. In Canaan
Genesis 12:6-9

- A. At Shechem (Gen. 12:6-7)
- B. Between Bethel and Ai (Gen. 12:8)
- C. Toward the Negev (Gen. 12:9)



We can divide Genesis 12:6-9 up with three geographical movements inside the land: number one, what happened to Abram at a place called Shechem, Genesis 12:6-7; number two, what happened to Abram as he sojourned between Bethel and Ai, Genesis 12:8; then the paragraph ends with Abram making a move into the southern part of the nation, into a place called the Negev, Genesis 12:9.

Notice how geographically sophisticated your Bible is: Shechem, Bethel, Ai, the Negev, Haran, Ur of the Chaldeans. You get the idea that these events really happened. This is not VeggieTales. This is not Jack and the Beanstalk. This is not somebody making up a bunch of fabrications and fictions. These are real people in real circumstances with real, identifiable pieces of geography. I will give you some geographical evidence for some of these things in this chapter, perhaps a little bit later, or if time does not permit, next week.

I want you to understand that about your Bible: your Bible is a book of history. Your children and your grandchildren get under secular education, and they think that their professors and their teachers are giving them the real history, and that what you get at church is just fiction. I am here to tell you, as a student of God's Word, that is a bald-faced lie. It is completely incorrect. At place after place after place mentioned in the Bible, the historical and the archeological record vindicates what these chapters of the Bible are speaking of. We will try to introduce some of that evidence as we proceed.

Notice Genesis 12:6-7, where Abram is now moving down from Haran into the land of Canaan. Notice what happens to him at a place called Shechem.

"Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh...." (Genesis 12:6).

So where exactly is Shechem? Well, the best we can tell, that is probably its location—that red arrow towards the top. That is where Shechem and Moreh existed.



Now, I apologize for that map in advance. This is the problem with using maps through Google images, because you are looking so hard to find a map that describes what it is you are talking about, so you have to make a few concessions. You notice that the map says "West Bank." What do I think about the expression "West Bank"? The truth of the matter is that you do not find the terminology "West Bank" in the Bible. That land is properly called "Judea and Samaria."

Now, the world community has turned that into the West Bank. Sadly, when you use that terminology, you are taking the perspective of Jordan. Jordan is just to the east, because that land is west of Jordan, but it is not west of Israel. It is east of Israel.

We oftentimes use a vernacular like "Palestine." If you did not hear Olivier Melnick's Sunday School lesson this morning, I would encourage you to track that down in the archives. He was dealing a little bit with the subject of Palestine. Here is another example: the term "West Bank." We throw these terms around and we throw these words around, and we do not really understand that we are taking political sides that are not really godly by using terminology like that. We can just scratch out "West Bank" right there and put "Judea and Samaria."

So Abram goes to Shechem. Then notice the second part of Genesis 12:6. It says,

"...Now the Canaanite was then in the land" (Genesis 12:6).

This land is already occupied. Well, who is it occupied by? A group of people called the "Canaanites." Well, where in the world did the Canaanites come from? Well, Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Through the lineage of Ham came four sons. One of them was named Canaan. The Canaanites were put under a curse, as we have studied. It was not some kind of racial curse. That is how it is wrongly interpreted by many today. They were under a curse because they imitated the detestable practices of their father, Ham.

You will recall how Ham, in Genesis 9:22, 24-25, had uncovered his father's nakedness. It was some sin, and as the saying goes, "The apple does not fall far from the tree." The Canaanites became immoral, imitating the immorality of Ham. Where did the Canaanites settle? They settled in this particular land up north that became known as the land of Canaan, destined to become the land of Israel.

So when Abram arrived, the land was already occupied by these people. This is where the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, the Hamathites—and as we like to say, the Out-of-Sights and the Electric-Lights and the Mosquito-Bites—settled. (I just throw that kind of stuff in to make sure you are still listening.) The truth of the matter is these people were wicked to the core, and they were not going to be expelled from the land until the days of Joshua, about six centuries after Genesis 12 occurred.

If you want to see the detestable, wicked practices of these people, you could read the Book of Leviticus. Don't panic—not the whole book, just Leviticus 18 and 20. Some of the sins that were being committed by the Canaanites that are described in Leviticus 18 and 20 are so vile—they violate every normal sexual boundary—they are so disgusting—that it is difficult to even read those sections of the Bible in a mixed audience, quite frankly.

When you study the archeological record of that time period, the type of what we today would call smut, trash, pornography, is all over the archeological record of that time period. I want you to understand that according to Genesis 15:16, which obviously we have not gotten to yet, God allowed this whole thing to go on for four hundred years. Think of the length of that period of time—four hundred years. That is almost roughly double the United States in terms of longevity, before God brought judgment on these people through General Joshua in the Book of Joshua.

The Canaanites were allowed to continue on and on and on with their detestable depravity for four hundred years, and that is a testimony of the grace of God. By the way, when Joshua and his group entered, these people had access to the truth. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" Because one of the Canaanites was Rahab the harlot, and in the Book of Joshua, when the Israelite spies entered Jericho, Rahab made a very interesting statement.

She said, "We know about you. We know about your God. We actually know about what your God did with the Jordan in terms of the miracle that occurred there, and we know about what your God did with the drying up of the Red Sea, forty years earlier."

So these were people that had the truth. They had a knowledge of the truth. I am not sure how the truth got to them, but they had access to it and they lived in rebellion against it. So Abram, six centuries before Joshua's conquest, is coming into this area, and the Canaanites are dominating. It would be like going into one of the most wicked, perverse, evil cities in the United States. I used to have a list of five cities that I would call out, but now there are so many of them, it would take me all day to read all the names.

It would be like seeing pornography, abortion on demand, everything that is wicked. And God is saying, "Do you know what? The day is going to come when all of these people in this city are going to be evicted, and I am going to build the land of Israel right here." That is the type of revelation that Abram is receiving. He is going to receive here a promise from God that is against all odds.

In fact, the promise is so fanciful from the human perspective, that the natural tendency would just be to lapse into unbelief and say, "God will never do that." But God means what He says and He says what He means. So what about that promise in this land occupied by wicked people who were descended all the way from Ham, who did a wicked thing to Noah? Look at Genesis 12:7:

"The LORD appeared to Abram..." (Genesis 12:7).

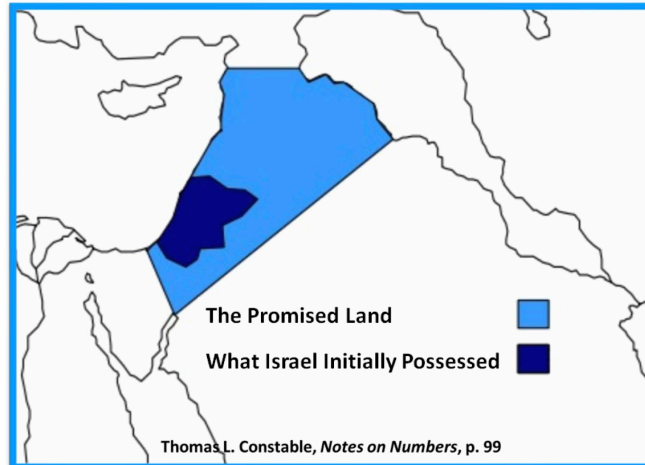
Now, this is the second time this has happened. The Lord has already appeared to Abram once, in Genesis 12:1, and now it is happening a second time. This is one of the reasons Abram was blessed. The Lord, in the Book of Genesis, is not going to appear to Abraham once. He is not going to appear to him twice. But there will be seven separate instances in the Book of Genesis where this will take place. Abram is receiving direct revelation from God. And Abram's gotta conclude it must be God, because the promise that he is about to receive is so absolutely unbelievable.

So what exactly was that promise? It is right there in Genesis 12:7:

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

That is an astounding prediction. The Canaanites were in the land. They were there for a long time. They were working out all of their debaucheries and their evil. And God says, "In my timing, the whole land is yours [Abram's]." It is rather interesting that this starts to get developed in what is called the Abrahamic Covenant, which will start to be developed in Genesis 15.

Right now, Genesis 12 contains promises. And those are enough. But the technical word for "covenant," the Hebrew word "berit" (בְּרִית) is not used here. That word is not going to be used until Genesis 15:18-21, where we learn that the nation of Israel, currently the size of New Jersey, in God's timing is going to be as big as the state of Texas times two. I had to throw that in for our Texas audience. I am sure they would like that. Olivier Melnick, in his Sunday School lesson, covered that.



The promised land of Israel is a plot of real estate which, once ratified into covenantal form in Genesis 15, is going to extend all the way from modern-day Egypt to modern-day Iraq—all the way from the Nile to the Euphrates. What a bizarre, unbelievable promise that God is making here, initially in promissory form. We have not reached the level of a covenant yet. That is coming in Genesis 15. How unbelievable that would have seemed to Abram that that could happen one day. And yet God says, "Watch Me. It is going to happen."

I told you that in Genesis 12:1-3 there are eight blessings. What God is doing in Genesis 12 is fleshing out these blessings. He has talked to Abram about land. Now He is taking Abram to the land and saying, "Here is what you are going to occupy one day." Now, it is interesting to observe that the promise here, Genesis 12:7, was not made to Abram personally. Did you catch that? Look again at Genesis 12:7. It says,

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

Abram never personally received a plot of real estate of that magnitude. We know from Genesis 23 that the only plot of real estate that he received by the time of his death was a burial plot for his wife, Sarah, which is quite minuscule in comparison to everything that God has promised. Abram died without receiving the full dimensions of this promise, and part of it relates to the fact that the promise was not really given to Abram personally. It is very clear here that it is given to *"your descendants"* (Genesis 12:7).

This is where we start to develop the idea that that part of the world is owned by God, and God gives it to whom He wants. He did not call it "the West Bank." He did not call it "Palestine." He did not give it to whoever gets in there fast and occupies it. God is very clear that this land goes to the physical descendants of Abram, whom we know will become the Hebrews, or the Jewish people, as God continues to work through Abraham and then Isaac and then Jacob.

Now, if you received a promise like that, that would just seem so unbelievable. If God spoke it to you directly through direct revelation, what would you do? Abram does the

only thing you can do when God puts you into that position: he begins to worship the Lord. You see that at the end of Genesis 12:7:

"...So he [Abram] built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him" (Genesis 12:7).

This is the first righteous altar in a land dominated by paganism. What does Abram do when he receives this information, this revelation from God? The only thing you can do—start to worship. That is why I have entitled this message "A Lifestyle of Worship." Most of us have fought in our churches about the issue of worship—these are called "the worship wars"—for so long that your average Christian today, involved in all of those conflicts—style of music and all of these different things that people war against and churches divide over—most of the people involved in those conflicts probably could not give you a definition of worship. We need to figure out what worship is.

Here is the simplest definition of worship that I know of. I learned it from my professor, J. Dwight Pentecost, in a course that he taught through the Book of Revelation. He got to Revelation 4, where it talks about that heavenly scene of worship amongst the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, and the myriads upon myriads of angels. He simply gave this definition: worship is a response to truth. That is what worship is.

God has disclosed to you something that is so outside of human thinking (which is what Abram has received here) that what can you do with it other than just to explode into praise and worship to God? I think that is the right attitude about worship. We should come to church or be amongst God's people, and we should just be so overwhelmed at what God has given us that the only thing we really know how to do is just to explode into praise and worship to the Lord.

"Well, should we do it a cappella? Should we do it with a piano? Should we do it with an organ? Should we do it with a guitar?" If you really want my opinion on the matter, it should not matter. The issue is the revelation of God. It does not matter if you have a talented worship leader, or someone like myself coming up to lead worship who cannot carry a note with a handle on it.

It should not matter, because the issue is what God has disclosed, and you take any available means—you take any available opportunity—and you just praise the Lord. This is what Abram is doing here. He has received a promise that defies human imagination and human description, so his first order of business is to set up this altar, which he does here.

Do not panic out there. A lot of people think when we talk like this, "Oh, no, Sugar Land Bible Church—they are moving left. They are going to go contemporary (whatever that means)." Do not worry. Everything's going to stay exactly the same. But we need to shift our focus on why we do what we do. The worship time, the singing time, is not just to fill up minutes on a bulletin. It is there for a purpose. It is God's people's opportunity to praise the Lord because of the truth we have received.

I have my own private heresy on this, which I guess I will share with you. I have always thought we have had everything backwards in evangelicalism, where we do the worship and praise first and then the message second. That has never made a lot of sense to me, if worship is a response to truth. Truth comes through the message. Truth comes through a proclamation of divine truth through the Bible. And if we are receiving truth through the Bible, through the message, maybe we should do the worship at the end.

We do that here somewhat. Did you notice that when I am finished we will come up and do a song of praise and then we give the benediction? God has shown us something through this message, and we just want to praise the Lord. That is what Abram is doing. He is developing this lifestyle of worship where he puts this altar in Satan's turf, in pagan territory.

The geographical movement moves from Shechem to a further journey south in between Bethel and Ai. Notice what Genesis 12:8 says, as we are tracking the geography.

"Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east;..." (Genesis 12:8).

So Abram is continuing to move in a southern direction. What does he do when he gets to Bethel and Ai? Look at what it says there in Genesis 12:7:

"...So he built an altar there [that is the second one] to the LORD who had appeared to him" (Genesis 12:7).

Abram was not just the type of person who worshiped the Lord periodically. He did it all the time. He did it in the most difficult of circumstances, living amongst pure paganism as promulgated by the Canaanites. Beloved, this is what the Christian life should be: a lifestyle of worship.

Paul the Apostle writes to us of the Church Age in Romans 12:1. He says,

"Therefore I urge you, brethren [clearly speaking to believers], by the mercies of God,..." (Romans 12:1).

What mercies would those be? How about Romans 1-11, where we learn that we are dead in our trespasses and sins, Romans 1:18-3:20; and then we learn of God's gospel by which we can be saved, Romans 3:21-5:21. "Oh, no, Lord—I am saved; how do I live for You?" God says, "Do not worry about it. I have given you resources," Romans 6-8—your baptism into Christ, Romans 6; the walk of the Holy Spirit, Romans 8.

Paul ends Romans 8 by saying, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God." Then somebody in the back of the room raises their hand and says, "Well, wait a minute, Paul. What about the nation of Israel? They are currently in unbelief, and it sure looks like God clipped the cord on Israel. And if God clipped the cord on Israel, He can clip the cord on me, a Gentile believer, and what God promised me in the end of Romans 8."

God says, "Do not worry about Israel. I have a whole plan in mind where Israel is going to be restored—Romans 9, Israel in the past elected; Romans 10, Israel in the present rejected; Romans 11, Israel in the future accepted." What is being unfolded to Paul is just blessing after blessing after blessing, after blessing that he has in Christ Jesus. God has thought of every possible objection and answered them in the Book of Romans. So what can Paul do other than praise the Lord? That is why Romans 11 leads to Romans 12. Isn't that cutting edge information there?

All Paul can do is offer his body as a living sacrifice to God. Why would Paul do that? To make sure he is saved? No. To keep his end of the deal? No, all those promises are unconditional. After having all of these blessings articulated, he says, "The only thing I know how to do—the only reasonable thing to do—the only logical thing to do—is to have a lifestyle of worship."

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God [which just got articulated in Romans 1-11], to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

That is worship. That is a lifestyle of worship. That is not for half an hour on a Sunday morning. That is going through your entire life. You keep saying, "Lord, I want You to have this part of my life over here under control, and I want You to have that part of my life under control, under Your Spirit. And I am not doing this, by the way, Lord, because I think I have lost my salvation. You have told me that I cannot lose my salvation. There is absolutely nothing that You need from me for You to keep Your promises, because they are unconditional, much like the promises to Abram.

"But here is what I can do, Lord—I am so dumbfounded at my spiritual bank account and how rich I am, how I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3), that the only thing I really know how to do, Lord, is just to worship. I am not going to get persnickety or nasty about styles, or about preferences. I am just going to praise You."

That is what Abram is doing here: a lifestyle of worship. Look at how he keeps worshipping. Look at Genesis 12:8:

"...and there he built an altar to the LORD [that is altar number two] and called upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis 12:8).

I have not found the expression "calling on the name of the LORD" anywhere thus far in our study in Genesis other than Genesis 4:26. In Genesis 4 the godly line of Seth was being developed. Because Cain had murdered Abel God began a new line, not the ungodly line of Cain, but the godly line of Seth.

To show us how that line was different from the wicked line, Genesis 4 says this:

"To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis 4:26).

That is godliness. That is what characterized that whole line. And Abram, after being called out of paganism from Ur of the Chaldeans, after receiving these direct revelations from God, is doing the same: he is calling upon the name of the Lord.

Can I just ask you a private question—and no one can answer it but you? When was the last time you called on the name of the Lord in anything? We do not believe a person has to call on the name of the Lord to be justified. They can if they want to. They just have to believe in Christ. But God puts us in positions in which we need Him—we need His help—we are dependent upon Him. What does He want us to do? He wants us to just call on His name, to cry out to Him: "Lord, help me."

What your Bible says is that the grace of God that saved you is absolutely one hundred percent sufficient for whatever it is you are walking through. The God that you called on for salvation is the God that you can keep calling on as you go through exigencies and problems and the trials of life. Abram was far from a perfect person, but I tell you this much: he was a worshiper. That is obvious as you read this story and it unfolds to us.

Now as we continue with Abram's life in the land of Canaan, we have another geographical move where he moves towards the Negev. Notice, if you will, Genesis 12:9. It says,

"Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev" (Genesis 12:9).

"The Negev" is the Negev desert. It is in the southern part of the land. Here is another map. (Sorry again for the West Bank language. Other than that, it is not a bad map.) Abram is moving now to the southern part of the land of Israel.



Do you see what God has just done with Abram? He started him up north in this journey, and he is taking him all the way down south. It communicates the idea that "Abram, this whole thing, this whole enchilada—maybe that is not the best analogy—this whole shawarma is for you, ultimately, one day, and for your descendants."

It is rather interesting when, much later, Joshua conquers Jericho. You remember that story. "How are we going to do it, Lord?" "Well, here is what you are going to do—how is this for a battle plan? You are going to walk around it, and on the seventh time, the walls are going to fall." What? Why would God have them walk around it at least six times?

Because He is showing them visibly: "The whole thing is yours. Now, you are not going to be able to achieve victory through your petty manipulation and scheming—I am going to give you the victory. But

this whole thing is yours."

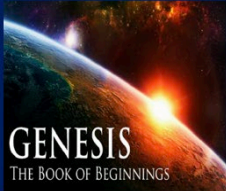
That, essentially, is what Abram is doing as he is walking through bad neighborhoods of paganism and Canaanite debauchery. God starts Abram up north, moves him all the way down south, and he is saying, "This whole thing is yours, but I will bring it into Israel's occupation according to My power. It will not be your petty schemes and manipulations that bring this to pass."

Boy, I will tell you—Abram had to learn that lesson. We move here into Genesis 12:10-20, where Abram just makes bad decision after bad decision. He makes one bad decision and it leads to another bad decision. And God, through grace, has to reach out and grab him. Does that sound familiar? It is interesting in my life, when I have made decisions that are not of faith—decisions done out of disobedience—decisions in which I am not really trusting the Lord as I should—it is interesting that when I make one bad choice, it is so easy to make a second bad choice, and a third bad choice.

Usually your second bad choice is trying to cover up for your first bad choice. And by the way, when you study ethics, this is what always gets people. It is not the first unethical decision. It is the cover-up. Just ask Richard Nixon and people like that about that. It is the cover-up that gets you. This is what is happening to Abram. He makes a bad choice out of unbelief, and now he makes another bad choice because he is trying to protect himself. He does not understand that his protection ultimately comes from God, not from manipulation.

III. In Egypt
Genesis 12:10-20

- A. Famine (Gen. 12:10)
- B. Fabrication (Gen. 12:11-13)
- C. Fulfilled prediction (Gen. 12:14-16)
- D. Fury of God (Gen. 12:17)
- E. Fury of Pharaoh (Gen. 12:18-20)



So Abram moves into Egypt and we have a famine, Genesis 12:10; a bad decision, Genesis 12:10; a fabrication, Genesis 12:11-13; Abram makes a human prediction which is fulfilled, Genesis 12:14-16; and God expresses His wrath, Genesis 12:17, not at Abram, but at Pharaoh. Why would God execute His wrath against Pharaoh's coming against Abram, when Abram was the one who made two bad decisions? Answer: Genesis 12:1-3. The promises that Abraham has received are not conditional, but unconditional.

Then Pharaoh does not like the fact that he has been lied to, Genesis 12:18-20, so you see his fury expressed at Abram at the end of Genesis 12. As time permits, notice, if you will, Genesis 12:10, and notice the next geographical move.

"Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was very severe in the land" (Genesis 12:10).

Now we have a problem. "God, you gave me this land. God, you showed me this land. And now things are not working out the way I need them to work out, because there is a famine in the land. Maybe I did not hear You right on the front end." There are people in here who need to understand what I am saying. If God has called you to do something and you have stepped out in faith and things are not going well, you may think to yourself, "Well, I must have missed the voice of God. I must have missed the plan of God." Yet the reality is that you are directly in His will. He has put you in that position so that you are going to have to trust Him more—so that flabby faith muscle can be developed more—so that He can execute even greater things through your life.

So Abram is following God, and God puts Abram into a problem. The problem with Abram, though, is he does not go to the Lord for the answer. He starts to try to fix it himself. So he goes down into Egypt. He was in Canaan and now he is sojourning outside of the land that God gave him and he is sojourning down into Egypt.

By the way, with Joseph, ultimately, the same kind of trajectory is going to happen when we get to Genesis 37-50 (hopefully before the Rapture of the church). The word "sojourn," Genesis 12:10, basically means a temporary residence. Abram thought, "I am just going to help God out a little bit temporarily." Why is this an issue? Because God—study the passage yourself—never told Abram to leave Canaan and sojourn into Egypt.

God has appeared to Abram twice and talked about the land that his descendants would possess. Now Abram has a problem in the land: it is not just a famine, it is a severe famine. "So I am going to have to solve this problem myself. I am going to have to take matters into my own hands, and I am going to have to go somewhere that God really never told me to go to."

All Abram had to do in the midst of this crisis was stay exactly where he was and trust the Lord, because it does not matter if there is a famine in the land—God is the provider. "Well, Andy, you do not understand. Have you looked at the inflation statistics? Have you looked at how the price of everything is accelerating? Have you looked at what has happened to the small-business world, and all of this climate lockdown insanity that we find ourselves in? Have you noticed that the small-business world has almost disappeared?"

My answer to that is, "Yeah, I can see all of that. But explain to me how any of that changes the character of God. Is it not true that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever? Doesn't the Bible teach, Philippians 4:19, Paul writing, that my God will supply some—whoops, it does not say that—all of your greeds—whoops, it does not say that either."

What Philippians 4:19 says is,

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

"Yeah, but Andy, you do not understand. At my job, where I have to choose between the jab or the job." Do you think that God is somehow surprised by that? Do you think that God somehow did not know that this moment in American history, and these circumstances, these very adverse circumstances, would arrive?

I am not trying to make light of them at all. These are real problems that people are having. But you have to understand something: these circumstances have not altered who God is at all. His promises are exactly the same. God can work with a Republican in the White House. And dare I even say this in Texas? God can work with the Green Party in the White House. He can work with any party in the White House, because God is God.

David said this in Psalm 37:25:

*"I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).*

David says in the Psalms, "I have been at this for a long time. I was the second king of the United Kingdom. I committed murder and adultery and fled from Saul. I was restored to my throne." In other words, David is saying, "I have seen it all. There is not anything that can be seen that I have not seen in terms of life experience. But here is something I have never seen: I have never seen a situation where God's children were forsaken or begging for bread." God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The problem with Abram is that he does not believe that. He just had to stay put, but he started to try to fix things through his own power and he sojourned down into Egypt. Then he started to think, "My wife is very beautiful at the age of sixty-five." (That is an accomplishment.) "In fact, she is so beautiful that one of the Egyptian authorities, like Pharaoh, might actually take her for himself into his own harem, and he might kill me. So let's hatch plan number two. To fix that one, I will just tell a lie. It will not be a complete lie. It will be a half-lie. I will say she is my sister because she really is my half-sister. I just did not tell the whole truth."

So Abram made a bad decision to sojourn into Egypt, which I do not think he should have ever done. Now he has to spawn a lie to accommodate for dangerous circumstances that God never put him in. That is how it works. When we go the wrong direction on this, it is one bad decision followed by a second bad decision covering the first bad decision, etc.

I mentioned a little earlier about archeology and this will be my final point for today. Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes,

"Archeology has verified what is described in this verse [Genesis 12:10], because paintings in the Tomb of Khnun-hotep III in Beni Hagen, which dates back to the time of Sesostri II (1897-1878 b.c.), show the arrival of thirty-seven Asiatic men, women, and children in the same period of Abram. Thus, Egypt regularly experienced migrations of Asiatics into Egypt, especially in times of famine."¹

So what is described in Genesis 12:10 is a credible scenario based on the archeology of the time. People normally went to Egypt to get out of circumstances like this. But the problem is that just because the world is doing it does not mean it is of God. And Abram is thinking here very much like a worldly person, because his faith is in a state of infancy, and he is not standing aggressively on the promises of God. So he is saying to himself, "I have to wiggle my way out of this, and I will do it the world's way."

Now, if you are doing that, get ready for God to work in your life, because He is going to show you, just like he showed Abram, that is not going to work. You are My child. I love you. I bought you with My own blood. I want to use you. But you are not going to get far in your walk with Me while you are doing things like this."

Abram is going to learn a lesson that we all need to learn: that we live the Christian life not through manipulation and scheming, but when we hit a crisis, we stand on God's truth. That, beloved, is about the only thing that you could trust in this day and age. All of these news sources, all of these politicians, and all of these academics, just lie to you around the clock, and you have to figure out who it is you are going to listen to, and who it is you are going to believe. So we can all identify with Abram in his growth.

What is the whole thing about? It is about the special nation coming into existence so Jesus can show up. Why did Jesus have to show up? Because He had to die, He had to be buried, He had to be resurrected, and He had to ascend, in order to pay our sin debt through that transaction. God is doing all of this to get Jesus and the knowledge of Jesus to you today. That is how much God loves you. That is how much He wants a relationship with you.

So that is why we like to conclude our services with the Gospel where Jesus says, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). Christianity is not "Do this, do that, do this, do that." At the end of the day that is a bunch of doo-doo when you think about it. But Jesus' work is done. It is not a "Do," but it is done. We trust in what He did for us.

So if you are here today and you have never trusted in Christ, you can do it right now in the privacy of your own thoughts and mind as the Spirit of God places you under conviction. It is not something you have to join a church for, raise a hand for, or walk an aisle for. It is a matter of privacy between you and the Lord, where the Lord puts you under conviction and you trust in His finished work for the safekeeping of your soul.

¹ Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 248.