

The Covenant with Abraham (1)  
Genesis 12:1-3  
Prepared for WellSpring Church  
July 10, 2011

1. Introduction
  - a. Engage
  - b. Review
    - i. What is a covenant?
    - ii. why are covenants important for us to study?
    - iii. the two we have studied
      1. Adamic
      2. Noahic
  - c. Preview—We will see that God simultaneously continues his previous plan and starts over with something fresh...
    - i. Romans 4:17
    - ii. We need to see that the call of Abraham is not the beginning of redemptive history. It is connected to the events of the first 11 chapters. And we see two things
      1. the continual refusal of man to obey and serve God—the continued threat to the promise by human unbelief and apostasy.
      2. God who refuses to give up
    - iii. We will also see God narrow his work to one man before he widens it again to the nations.
  - d. Big Idea: God's New thing is to keep his promise
2. Background and Review—From Flood to Babel
  - a. People saved by God in the ark
  - b. Sin enters immediately (drunkenness, whatever Ham's sin was)
  - c. Refusal to scatter—God had told the people to fill the earth, instead they had stayed put and built cities
  - d. Nimrod—a mighty hunter—But his name also means “rebel”
  - e. Let us build a tower and make a name for ourselves, not let us be known by our relationship to God, but rather let us be indented apart from God.
    - i. Tower to reach God
    - ii. tower to draw people toward
    - iii. a tower of protection against God—a citadel, fortress.

It is a great mistake to regard that event as an isolated occurrence; rather is it to be considered as the heading up of an evil course and movement. Of the events which transpired from the Deluge to the call of Abraham embracing an interval of over four centuries—the information we possess is brief and summary, yet enough is recorded to show that the character of man is unchanged, the same in principle and practice as it had been before the Flood. It might perhaps have been expected that so terrible a judgment would have left upon the survivors and their descendants for

many generations a deep and salutary impression, which would have acted as a powerful restraint upon their evil propensities. Alas, what is man! (A.W. Pink, The Divine Covenants)

- f. They are seeking to build God out of their world by nation building—but God comes into the world to both spread the people into a world of nations and also to build a nation for himself that will be a channel for his blessing to all peoples. He does this by calling a man to be the progenitor, the beginning of a new nation. God calls a man to missionary service. The globally interested God uses an individual to reach the nations. As we saw last week, in judgment there is grace.
  - i. God did not destroy these people
  - ii. God did not leave man to his own devices
- 3. Who is Abraham?
  - a. First of all we see that he is a Semite, or more accurately a Shemite.
    - i. Noah. Noah had three Sons. We first see the lin of Japheth (10:2-5) and then the line of Ham/Canaan (10"6-20
    - ii. Shem→Terah Notice the Covenant hinge in the prophecy of Gen. 9:25-27
      - 1. God of Shem
      - 2. Lord = Covenant name
    - iii. Terah
    - iv. Abram: "Out of all the Semitic peoples and families God choose the people of Abraham to carry out his will in the world.
    - v. What we see here again is the establishment of the Sethite line in contrast to the line of Cain. "these are the generations of..." is the signal that God is showing us the integrity of this history and the flow of history.
  - b. What else do we know about him?
    - i. An idol worshipper
      - 1. Josh 24:2-3
      - 2. The call of God to Abram was pure grace. If you read Jewish histories you will find that Abram is portrayed as a god-fearing hero who defied the polytheism of his day.

That it was grace, grace alone, sovereign grace, which called Abraham to be the friend of God, appears clearly from his natural state and circumstances when the Lord first appeared to him. Abraham belonged not to a pious family where Jehovah was acknowledged and honored; instead his progenitors were idolaters...There was nothing whatever, then, in the object of the divine choice to commend him unto God, nothing in Abraham that merited His esteem. No, the cause of election is always to be traced to the discriminating will of God; for election itself is "of grace" (Rom. 11:5) and therefore it depends in no wise upon any worthiness in the object, either present or foreseen. If it did, it would not be "of grace."

- ii. A weak man
  - 1. Didn't fully obey at first
  - 2. lied to Pharaoh
  - 3. had a child by his slave woman Hagar in order to help God out...
- iii. A man of faith—this really is incredible. Abram responded to the call of an unknown God to go to an unknown land for an unknown purpose. God called and chose Abram for no other purpose than his own good pleasure. Hebrews 11:8-10 **8** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.
- iv.
- 4. What do we learn about God in the call of Abraham? We must ask this question because our natural tendency is to look at Abraham the man and see what we can learn from him? What can we do that Abraham did so that we too can receive the blessing of God. So we need to ask a much more important question here: What does this passage show us about God?
  - a. First we see the Hand of God on History. This is what we call Providence. Providence is the powerful and unthwartable superintendence of God over his creation—all of it—and the flow of History for the purpose of accomplishing His own will and pleasure.
    - i. Definition of The 1689 London Baptist Confession “God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.”
    - ii. God brought the flood, saved Noah, allows people to multiply, protects them and then scatters, calls...
    - iii. Note this: There is no archeological history of the Patriarchs!
  - b. Faithful to his promise and plan Genesis 3:15
    - i. History is not pointless and merely a reaction of natural causes and events and the work of people
    - ii. Neither is it cyclical and going nowhere
    - iii. History—time- is moving toward the fulfillment of God's plan and will.

- c. Sovereignly free. God will do what God determines and wants to do.
  - i. Psalm 115:3
  - ii. Psalm 135:6
- d. He is a Holy, obedience demanding God.
- e. He is a gracious God—Man is not destroyed
- f. Choosing—this is the outworking of his freedom and his grace—he elects and chooses and brings people to himself who are not looking for him.
  - i. We love to think that we are free to choose, but why is it that we deny this same freedom of God?
  - ii. As Michael Williams writes: "...election is not a theological term, but a biblical one...God's sovereign right to choose the recipients of his grace drips from the pages of scripture.
  - iii. Scripture references...
    - 1. Dt. 4:37
    - 2. Dt. 7:6-8
    - 3. Dt. 10:14-15
    - 4. Dt. 14:2
  - iv. Grace is a gift
  - v. Grace must be a free gift and not an obligation or else it ceases to be grace.

"The words *obligation* And *gift* mutually exclude one another. The common objection to the doctrine of election in favor of a universally dispensed grace not only denies God the divine prerogative to choose whom he will redemptively love but also makes God's grace a necessary structure of the world, like gravity or photosynthesis, to which all people are entitled. If grace is an obligation, a structure or an entitlement, it is no longer a gift, and no longer grace." (Williams, Far as the Curse is Found, 105)

- vi. Notice that even when we distinguish between the line of Seth and the line of Cain, God's decision is still one of Grace.
5. Where is the Covenant?
- a. 12:1-2? No this is the original call and promise
    - i. Imperative "Go"

Before proceeding further, let us pause and take stock of our own souls. Have we experienced anything which at all corresponds to this radical change in the life of Abraham? Have you, have I, been made the subjects of a divine call which has produced a right-about-face in our lives? Have we been the subjects of a divine miracle, so that grace has wrought effectually upon our hearts? Have we heard something more than the language of Scripture falling upon our outward ears? Have we heard God Himself speaking in the most secret recess of our souls, so that it may be said, "The gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5)? Can it be said of us, "The word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13)? Is the Word

working effectually in us, so as to govern our inner and outer man, so as to produce an obedient walk, and issue in fruit to God's glory? (Pink, Divine Covenants, p. 101)

- ii. Promises
  - 1. I will make of you a great nation
  - 2. I will bless you and
  - 3. I will make your name great (notice here that God promises to give to Abram what he opposed at Babel)
- iii. Purpose "So that the nations of the earth will be blessed through you"
- iv. Second set of promises
  - 1. I will bless those who bless you
  - 2. whoever curses you will I curse
- v. Second purpose clause "So that by you all the peoples on the earth will be blessed"
- b. God is not turning his back on the people of the earth by choosing Abraham. He is making a way for all the nations to know blessing.
- c. God is saying, I am the name maker.
- d. 15:1-7 and elsewhere, 17:2
- 6. What does it mean?
  - a. A Seed (Savior) and a people
    - i. A people/Nation
      - 1. a common people
      - 2. a territory
      - 3. leadership
      - 4. rules
    - ii. A number that no man can number
  - b. Land—but why this land and not another?
    - i. semi arid
    - ii. unprotected by natural borders
    - iii. Crossroads,--the way to reach the rest of the world.
  - c. Blessing to Abraham—Recreates the presence and protection and communion of Eden "Friend of God" James 2:23, See also Gen. 17:1-2
  - d. A Blessing to the Nations—God is a missionary God.

Roger E. Hedlund "God reveals himself to be the missionary God. In the Garden God comes seeking man (Gen. 3:8ff). The world's religions represent man seeking for God. Here we see the reverse. In Genesis God takes the initiative. Men may seek God but they also flee from him. Adam tried to hide from God. But God entered the scene of Adam's disobedience, God, someone has said, was the first missionary. He came, he sought and he found, and he provided salvation for his lost creature (Gen. 3:8). Man is not left in his

predicament. God provides the remedy (Gen. 3:15) for the human race. This is the gospel of the Garden.” (quoted in Williams, 117)

- i. Isa. 2:2-5 all the people come to the mountain of God
- ii. All nations, tribes, tongue peoples. Rev. 7
- iii. God seeks Glory for himself—God is the gift.