

# Biblical Theology: Session III

## Review Previous Week:

- Assignments — Questions, comments, feedback...
- If you had to, what would you say is the theme of Genesis 1-11? Or, asked another way, what is the main thing Moses wants his readers to know about the character and nature of God from Genesis 1-11? [DISCUSSION]
- What are some ways that the river of Genesis 1-11 lead us to the ocean of Christ?

## Abraham

- Genesis 1-11 dealt with the creation of all things and all peoples. The scope is vast. Worldwide flood, long genealogies. It spans 2000 years. There is a narrowing in chapter 12. In Genesis 12 and through the rest of Genesis, Moses focuses on one family. Four generations: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Genesis 12-50 spans 400 years.
- What might be the theme of Genesis 12-50? I suggest it is the faithfulness of God to keep His covenant promise to create a people for Himself and give them a Land upon which He will be their God and through them bless the whole world. Turn to Genesis 12.
- **[Genesis 12:1-3]** God comes to one man, Abram, in chapter 12 and promises to make him into a great nation and that through him—Abram's descendants—God will bless the whole world. Look closely at this passage. What is significant about Abram that moved God to choose him?
- The only thing significant about God's choice of Abram is that there is nothing significant about Abram to move God to choose him. Right? Who is Abram? He is no one. God comes to Abram and issues a promise. God will bring him into a Land. God will bless him with many offspring. God will be their God. Through them God will bless the nations of the Earth.
- Remember the curse from Genesis 3. There will be difficulty between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Difficulty between the relationship of the man and the woman. Difficulty with regard to childbearing. And because of Adam's sin God issues a curse upon the Land. These blessings given to Abram are responsive to the curses of Genesis 3.
- In Genesis 4-11 we saw how all the families of the earth were under the cursed affects of Adam's sin. But through Abram's seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed. We're going to see in the life of Abram the difficulties of the seed overcome, we're going to see the difficulties between the man and the woman and reproduction overcome.
- There are four parts of this promise to note: (1) Land; (2) Seed; (3) Rule; (4) Blessing. What becomes significant to Biblical Theology is the implicit fact that none of those things can be done without God doing it. Abram



cannot give himself land, or give himself seed (as we will see), or make himself into God's chosen people, or become a blessing to the world.

- One of the main points of the Abrahamic narrative comes in chapter 18. When God reaffirms His covenant to give children to Abraham and Sarah, they laugh. Abraham is almost a 100 and Sarah is 90. They laughed at God. It's preposterous...*Inconceivable* (see what I did there?). And the Lord says in Genesis 18:14, "**Is anything too hard for the Lord?**" A year later, they had a son.
- This sort of thing is happening throughout the life of this covenant family. Unexpected things. Barren women giving birth. Younger brothers ruling older brothers. Arrogant men turned humble. Slaves becoming rulers. Homeless given homes. It seems almost every chapter is building this case that in the midst of impossible situations, what God has promised, God will do.
- To keep with the metaphor, each story has the same undercurrent. God will bring glory to Himself by graciously saving His people out of the most impossible circumstances. God is faithful when no one else is. What God has called us to, we don't do, so He does for us.
- God has so carefully arranged Genesis 12 through Exodus 40 to communicate His plan of salvation to encourage His people to trust in Him. If He can save His people (through impossible circumstances, in spite of themselves) like He does in these books, He certainly can save us today. Trust Him.
- So one of the themes we see developed through God's choice of Abram is: grace. God chose Abram for no reason other than God chose him. And within God's call upon Abram is this: "come out". Verse 1. "**Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.**" Come out of the land you are living in, come out of your family and your father's house, and come and see the Land I will give you.
- Any of that sound familiar? [Matthew 4:18-22] "**While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.**" When the Lord calls His people, He calls them to leave their old life, to take on a new life, a new identity, and to follow Him in His purposes.
- Abram leaving his father and kindred would have been a massive leap of faith. He was leaving his old identity behind and venturing into the unknown. And that's exactly what Hebrews 11 says it was. "**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.**"
- Abram was leaving his old life and taking on a new one. He was going into uncharted land. He had no idea where he was going, just trusting the Lord would be faithful to keep His promise.



- So here we see God choosing a man by grace—through no good deed of His own. We see that man acting on faith, trusting the Lord would be faithful to His Word. That he would wait his whole life to see it fulfilled. He would be saved *from* the world and used by God to bring the message of salvation *to* the world. Salvation by grace through faith. See that?
- Have you ever wondered how the Old Testament saints were “saved”? Well, you are going to see very soon, and more clearly in Exodus, they were saved in the same way we are. They are saved by grace through faith in God’s promise. It’s vague here and progressively becomes clearer as we move through the text.
- Just about as soon as the Lord gives Abram this promise, Abram puts the whole thing in jeopardy. Abram’s is in the land God sent him. And there’s a famine. He goes to Egypt. His wife Sarai is beautiful, and Abram is worried that if the Pharaoh finds out she’s his wife, he’ll kill him. So he tells Sarai to lie that she is his sister. Pharaoh takes Sarai captive and adds her to his harem. But the Lord afflicts Pharaoh with plagues and saves Sarai out of Egypt. Pharaoh sends Abram and Sarai away with riches.
- Any of *that* sound familiar? There’s a great famine in the land, God’s people go down to Egypt in search of food. Sarai gets sold into slavery (in a sense), the covenant promise of God is on the brink, the Lord sends plagues against the Egyptians and Abram and Sarai leave Egypt with wealth. Moses clearly wants his readers to understand the connection between here to their history in Egypt.
- In the same chapter as God’s covenant promise, we see Abram being unfaithful to it. He cannot be the father of many nations without his wife. And he abandons his responsibility to protect her. His cowardice and sin nearly jeopardizes the whole thing. It’s the story of Adam all over again, isn’t it? And yet, as with Adam, God remains faithful and delivers him. God brings glory to Himself by saving His people through judgment.
- So Abram and his nephew Lot have a conflict. They’re both rich and there’s not enough room for the both of them. Abram tells Lot, go wherever you want and I’ll go in another direction. Lot goes east to the Land of Sodom. (By the way, never go east in Genesis. Everyone who goes east ends up in a bad place. I don’t know why.) Abram settles in Hebron, God reiterates again the blessing upon his offspring.
- In chapter 14, Abram saves Lot from a bunch of kings. Abram is blessed by this mysterious figure Melchizedek, the king of Salem, a priest of God. I wish we could spend more time on this, but we’ve gotta get through Exodus. David picks up on this in Psalm 110, and the author of Hebrew puts it all together. He is not Christ, but a type of Christ. There’s wine and bread and offering. It’s a very rich passage.
- In chapter 15, Abram gets antsy. He is old and still has no children. He is complaining to the Lord. The Lord reaffirms His promise of seed and land. The Lord takes Abram outside and shows him the stars. Number the stars, so shall your offspring be. **[Read 15:1-6]**
- That famous verse 6, “**And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness.**” Couple things to note. Moses is not saying that belief *is* righteousness. Righteousness is obedience to God’s command. We already know that Abram is not righteous. He has not been obedient to God. Just ask his dear wife.



- Abram, though not righteous, believes God. He trusts in the Lord. And the Lord counts—considers him—righteous. Do you see that Abram’s righteousness did not come from him, it came from God. It is—to use a theological term—imputed to him. The Apostle Paul in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 draws from this passage to show that the only way anyone can be righteous in the sight of God is through faith, and faith alone. It was not Abram’s good deeds that made him righteous. It wasn’t even Abram’s faith that made him righteous. He trusted God and it was God who counted him righteous.
- I’ve quoted him many times before, but I think it’s so helpful. Dr. Al Mohler, puts it like this. *“In our day we think our problems are external and our solution is internal. The Bible teaches our problem is internal and our solution is external.”* We need an alien righteousness. One that does not come from us.
- Yet Abram’s obstacle remains. Sarai is barren. Abram asks the Lord for a sign. Then it gets kinda strange. The Lord has Abram bring some animals to him. Abram cuts them in half and separates them one half here and the other half here. Abram falls into a deep sleep. The Lord tells Abram that He will have descendants and they will inherit the Land, they will be afflicted for 400 years, and the Lord will judge their captors, and deliver them out with great possessions.
- After that, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch pass between the pieces of the offering. And in verse 18 we see that the Lord made a covenant with Abram. What the heck is this about?
- Cutting an animal in half and passing through the middle was a way of initiating a covenant by invoking a curse upon yourself if you were to break the covenant. It was a way of saying, if I break the terms of this covenant, what has happened to this animal happen to me. May I be broken apart, separated.
- Notice it was not Abram who walked through middle. Abram was asleep. Fire and smoke often accompany manifestations of God in the Old Testament. They are meant to represent the Lord Himself walking through the broken pieces of the sacrifice. It is as if the Lord is invoking a curse upon Himself. I’ll be cursed if this covenant is broken. He will be the One to carry out all the necessary obligations to keep His covenant with Abram.
- In Genesis 16 things are up in the air again. In the face of God’s covenant to bring about the promise by His own power, Abram and Sarai devise a man-made scheme to bring about the fulfillment of God’s promise on their own. The language of Genesis 16 is reminiscent of Genesis 3, isn’t it.
- Verse 2, Abram *listened* to the voice of his wife. She *took* her servant Hagar and *gave* her to her husband. It sure seems that Moses wants us to see that Abram was counted righteous by his faith. He is not counted righteous by his deeds.
- Hagar gives birth to a son, Ishmael. Though God promises to bless him, he will not be the son of promise. He is not the seed of the woman. And it’s so telling, isn’t it, how Sarai treats poor Hagar the moment she conceives. Sarai treats her with contempt. Isn’t that the way of our sin?
- In chapter 17, the Lord repeats his promise to Abram. He expounds upon things He has already promised. He changes Abram’s name to Abraham. Abram (Av-rahm) means high father. Abraham (Av-rah-cham) means father of a multitude. Sarai’s name is changed to Sarah, which means princess. He reiterates the promise to



give Abraham a son. His name will be called Isaac. And God will establish His covenant through Isaac, not Ishmael. God then gives him a sign of the covenant—circumcision.

- What is circumcision meant to be? It is an outward physical sign that someone is a part of the covenant family of God. Isaac is not yet born at this point. Abraham is 99, Sarah is 90. Abraham obeyed God and circumcised his household. It's important to note that Genesis 15 comes before Genesis 17. Paul tells us why that's important in Romans chapter 4.
- **[Romans 4:1-5, 9-12]** The point Paul is making is that the chronology of Abraham's life matters. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness before he received the sign of the covenant. Abraham was made righteous not through his obedience, but through his faith.
- Abraham was not justified—declared righteous—by his works. Verse 5, **“And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness”**. Right standing before God comes as a gift from God when sinners trust in God for their salvation. This reality is woven throughout the Bible. And this reality is brought into clearer focus in the book of Exodus. You can turn there.

## Exodus

- God is faithful to Abraham and Sarah and they give birth to Isaac. Isaac has Jacob and Jacob has twelve sons. Jacob's sons sell their brother Joseph into slavery. The Lord raised up Joseph and he becomes the second most powerful man in Egypt. The Lord warns Joseph of a seven year famine and Joseph stores up food.
- When the famine comes, Jacob and his family must turn to Egypt for help. Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and saves them from the famine. Seventy people go down into Egypt and settle. Joseph dies. The Israelites become so numerous in Egypt that Pharaoh is threatened by them and makes them into slaves.
- The book of Exodus opens with this interesting statement, **“But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.”** (1:7) Where have we heard that before? Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth. Adam, Genesis 1; Noah, Genesis 8 & 9; Abraham, Genesis 17 & 22; Isaac, Genesis 26 & 24; Jacob, Genesis 28 & 35; Joseph's sons, Genesis 48; and now all of Israel.
- However fruitful they are, they are not in the Land of Promise. They are slaves. God's promise to Abraham was in the balance once more. God's covenant people living as slaves, divorced from the Land that God had promised them.
- Pharaoh, the seed of the Serpent, is threatened by the Israelites and devises a plan to kill all the male children. By God's Providence, one child, one seed of the woman, is saved. His mother places him in a waterproof basket and sends him down the river, one of Pharaoh's daughters finds him and decides to raise him. She names him Moses.
- When Moses grew up he became burdened by the oppression of his people. He ends up killing an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew. Pharaoh chases him off. He settles in the Land of Midian. The Lord appears to Moses in the



burning bush, proclaims His covenant name YHVH, “Yahweh”, appears as “LORD” in your Bible. Yahweh sends Moses to deliver His people out of Egypt.

- Moses appears before Pharaoh and demands that he let God’s people go, if he doesn’t the Lord will inflict plagues on the land. Pharaoh refuses until the tenth and final plague. Between the sixth and seventh plague, the Lord says this, [SLIDE] **“Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘Let my people go, that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.’”** (9:13-16) You read in the Goldsworthy book how central the name of God is throughout the Exodus narrative.
- The tenth plague is the worst. It includes the death of all the firstborn. The Lord will pass through the land at night and strike all the firstborn. To protect His people, the Lord has Israel sacrifice a spotless lamb and spread its blood over the doorposts of their homes in Egypt. When the Lord sees the blood on the doorpost, He will pass over that home. This was to be remembered forever in the feast called Passover.
- At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn of the land. Finally, Pharaoh tells Moses to take his people and go. The Egyptians load the Israelites down with gold and silver and send them away. God brings glory to Himself by saving His people through judgment. The Exodus becomes one of the clearest markers of the central theme of Scripture.
- It’s the same theme as in Genesis 12-17. God chose Abraham. He believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Despite what he could see, Abraham trusted that the Lord. How does God save? Likewise Israel had to trust in God’s way of saving them through judgment. As judgment fell on the enemies of God, Israel was spared. How? By the blood of the Lamb. The sacrifice of the Lamb protected them. The Lamb would be offered in their place and there had to trust God that it’s death would protect them from His judgment.
- This, of course, was picked up on by the New Testament writers who understood this as ultimately pointing to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Lamb of God, who—as John the Baptizer put it—takes away the sins of the world. The sacrifice of the spotless lamb atoned for the sins of the people, the smeared blood of the lamb purified those in the house, and the sacrificial meat of the lamb consecrates those who consume it. It was no by accident that the Lord’s Supper was instituted by Jesus on Passover.
- Israel is delivered out of Egypt. Pharaoh changes his mind and sends an army after them. The Lord parts the Red Sea and drowns the Egyptian army when the waters receded. Israel saved through the waters of judgment that fell on Pharaoh’s army. Isn’t that sorta like what happened with Noah in the flood?
- When it seemed that all hope lost for God’s covenant, the Lord delivers His people and prepares to bring them to the Land where He will be their God and they will be His people. Moses sings a song in Exodus 15 that might as well be entitled, **“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”**



- What a great display of God's favor and power! You might think that Israel would move straight into the Land and begin doing everything the Lord commanded. But, just as Abraham failed to remain faithful, so does Israel. Not long after they are in the wilderness on the way to the Land of Promise, they begin to grumble and complain against the Lord.
- We don't have any water. God gives them miracle water. We don't have any bread. God gives them manna. They get tired of the miracle bread and want meat. God makes birds fly over their heads, die mid-flight and fall to the ground. They just gotta scoop em up and cook em. He keeps on showing them His faithfulness. *"You're My people; I will always provide for you. Trust Me."*
- The Lord leads them in a cloud by day and a pillar by night. He is teaching them how to be His people. In Exodus 19, they come to mount Sinai. Israel encamps at the base of the mountain, Moses goes up the mountain to meet with God. Turn to Exodus 19. Verse 4. The Lord tells Moses, say this to My people [SLIDE] **"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."**
- Israel is called to be a kingdom of priests, mediators between the Lord and the nations, to carry the message of God's glorious grace to sinners. She is to His people and He gives them His word. The Lord appears on the mountain with fire and smoke and thunder and rumbling. Despite the dramatic demonstration of God's glory and the visible presence of God among them, Israel finds herself falling over and over into idolatry and sin. We'll look at this a bit more next time.
- The undercurrent of Exodus carries us to the Lord Jesus. Israel's trip out of the Land of Promise into Egypt in search of food is like our search for sustenance outside of God. They are enslaved to the Egyptians as we are enslaved in sin. God sent them a deliverer; He sends us a Deliverer. Jesus becomes the blood sacrifice that atones for our sin and brings us out of captivity. He makes us His own, a kingdom of priests, gives us His word, and sends us to manifest His glory to the nations.
- What Israel couldn't do and be, Jesus did and is. Jesus is the Son of God that came up out of Egypt. He is the greater Moses who leads God's people out of captivity. He is the greater Abraham who trusted God. When God's covenant people broke God's covenant, the curse fell on Jesus. Those who are united to Him by faith are added to the family of God, brought into covenant relationship with Him, and become a kingdom of priests to our God. They are sent out—just as Jesus was sent by God the Father—to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.
- That's all we'll have time for tonight. Let's look at your assignments for the next session.

### Session III Assignments:

- Read Deuteronomy



- Goldsworthy, chapter 15-18

