

Genesis 20-27: The promises unfold...

This is our third dive into Genesis, as we work our way through the book that begins the Bible, over a number of years.

In Genesis 1-12, we saw the creation of the world, the breaking of the world, and the commitment of God to roll back the curse of this world and bring his blessing—through Abraham's family.

In Genesis 13-19, we saw the progression of these promises, as Abraham and Sarah moved into the land that God promised them, as God provided the birth of Isaac as the start of the people that God promised them, and as they experienced the goodness of the rule of God's word over them.

Now, in Genesis 20-27, we continue to watch those promises unfold, and move to the next generation—to Isaac and Rebekah, and then onto Jacob...

As we watch these promises continue to unfold, we are confronted by the constancy of the human nature and predicament, and the constancy of the character and nature of God and his promises.

Study 1: Genesis 20

Read Genesis 20.

Comprehend

1. Where is Abraham, what is his plan, and what is the outcome? (vs.1-2)
2. Looking at verses 3-8, how does God step in, and what is Abimelech's reaction?
3. Looking at verses 9-13, how does Abimelech deal with Abraham, and how does Abraham explain himself?
4. Looking at verses 14-16, how does Abraham emerge from this episode?
5. Looking at verses 17-18, what role does Abraham play?

Consider

6. Does this episode sound familiar to any other scenario in Abraham's life? What has changed, and what remains the same?
7. As you consider this episode, what is revealed about the nature of God, and the nature of Abraham?
8. As you consider this episode, how would you describe God's dealing with Abraham, and Abimelech?
9. What is significant about Abraham's action in verses 17-

8. What has been revealed about the promise of God, and the actions of humans?
9. What has been revealed about the role of sin, and its effects?

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10. Read Acts 4:1-31...

How does this show the consistency, across time, of the way of God working out his promises in a broken world, and the same interplay of God's promises and human sin and human action?

11. What do you find confronting about this passage?
12. What do you find encouraging about this passage?

**Study 9:
Genesis 27**

Read Genesis 27.

Comprehend

1. What is problematic about the picture presented of Isaac, and his words/actions, in verses 1-4?
2. What is problematic about the picture presented of Rebekah, and her words/actions, in verses 5-10?
3. How is Jacob part of the deception? (vs.11-27)
4. What is the result? (vs.27-29)

What does Jacob now have? (cf. Genesis 25:33)

5. What is the outcome for family relationships? (vs.30-41)
6. How does Rebekah deal with this situation? (vs.42-46)

Consider

7. What has been revealed about the character of:

Isaac:

Rebekah:

Esau:

Jacob:

18?

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10. In what way(s) is it possible for us to identify with Abraham?
11. In what way(s) is Abraham unlike us?

In this, how does Abraham give us a picture of Jesus?
12. What warnings/encouragements are there here for us as 'descendants of Abraham' as we walk in this broken world?

Study 2: Genesis 21

Read Genesis 21.

Comprehend

1. Verses 1-7 are a magnificent (albeit it surprisingly brief) account of the goodness of God. What is affirmed about God? (vs.1)

What do we learn about Sarah, Abraham and Isaac?

2. The birth of Isaac brought another type of 'laughter' - look at verse 9. What is the tension in the family and campsite?

How did Abraham find this situation, and how did God reassure him? (vs.11-13)

Knowing that God is already faithful to what he promised (vs.1), how does the next phase play out? (vs.14-21)

3. There are other events happening at the same time (look at verse 22). What threatens Abraham's existence at this point?

There are two covenants made here—what is the first focused on (vs.22-24)

What is the second covenant focused on? (vs.25-32)

4. What is the assessment of Abraham's situation in vs.33-34?

7. The section closes on a sad note—what is it? (vs.34-35)

Consider

8. How is Isaac like Abraham in these episodes?

How is he unlike Abraham in these episodes?

9. By the end of this section, how would you describe the state of the covenant God had made with Abraham, and where Abraham's family is?

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10. In what way is Isaac similar to God's people today? And different?
11. Note down any encouragement you find in this account of Isaac?

**Study 8:
Genesis 26**

Read Genesis 26.

Comprehend

1. What familiar situation has emerged in vs.1?

What familiar temptation has emerged in vs.1?

2. What is the clearly reassuring statement/promise of God? (vs.2-5)

And how does Isaac respond?

3. How is the temptation played out in vs.7-11?

What sounds familiar about this episode?

How does Genesis 20 help us understand Abimelech's response?

4. In vs.12-22, another familiar scenario emerges—what takes place?
5. In vs.23-25, who appears to Isaac, and what is clearly stated?
6. In vs.26-33, what happens? How is Isaac different in this episode? Why?

Consider

5. What do we learn about the character and nature and actions of God here?
6. What do we learn about the security of the promises of God here?
7. What do we learn about the interaction between God's promises and human sin here?
8. What do we learn about godly wisdom here?

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9. How might the insights into God's character here help us to walk confidently as his people now?
10. How might the insights into wisdom here help us make wise decisions as God's people now?
11. How might this passage prepare us as God's people for navigating our own sinful tendencies now?

**Study 3:
Genesis 22**

Read Genesis 22.

Comprehend

1. We are immediately told the purpose of the scene that follows—what is it? (vs.1)

2. What is the test, and how is Abraham's reaction portrayed? (vs.1-6)

3. The conversation on the way hints at the outcome—what is revealed about Abraham in vs.8?

How is this seen in Abraham's actions? (vs.9-10)

4. How does the LORD intervene, and what is provided, and revealed? (vs.11-14)

5. What does the LORD promise to Abraham? (vs.15-18)

What is significant about this episode, in light of Genesis 20?

6. What place/role does Genesis 22:20-24 play here?

Consider

7. Why is it important to have verse 1 here, and its description of this episode?

10. What is reassuring for you in this episode?

**Study 7:
Genesis 25:19-34**

Read Genesis 25:19-34.

Comprehend

1. What are we beginning? (vs.19)
2. Who is very clearly responsible for both the pregnancy of Rebekah, and helping her understand it? (vs.21, 23)
3. How are the two boys described? (vs.25-26, 27-28)
4. In verses 29-34, what happens?

Consider

5. What power is at work in these events, and why is it important to recognize this?
6. What do the birth episode, and the birth-rite episode, confirm about the character and roles of these brothers?
7. How does Romans 9:6-18 help us understand the nature, and work, of God in these episodes?
8. How does Hebrews 12:15-17 help us consider this as an episode of example?

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9. What is puzzling—if anything—for you in this episode?

8. How does 'testing' here apply to: the LORD, and to Abraham?
9. Think through how many fore-shadowings we have here of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus:
 - Gen.22:8—Mark 10:45, John 1:29, 1 Peter 1:18-19
 - Gen.22:9—Romans 8:32, Phil.2:6-8, 1 Peter 2:21-24
 - Gen.22:12—Heb.11:19
 - ... and any more!

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10. How should our attention be driven first to Jesus from Abraham and Isaac here, before we consider ourselves?
11. What lessons are presented here about: trusting God, testing by God, provision in God?

**Study 4:
Genesis 23**

Read Genesis 23.

Comprehend

1. What motivates Abraham to buy this plot of land?
2. What stand out about the negotiations in vv8-16
3. How many times are we told that Abraham now own the land? Why might this be?

Consider

4. Where is Sarah's tomb located, and why is this important?
(see Gen 12:5-7)
5. Did God use spectacular or ordinary means to begin fulfilling the promise that he made to Abraham?
6. How might this purchase of land help Abraham trust the God will do as he has promised?
7. What do we learn about God when we consider this?

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8. How can we be certain that God will fulfil his promises to us?
9. How have you seen God act in the normal course of life?

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6. In terms of Abraham's life/death/experience, what similarities might there be with our life as God's people today?
7. What reassurance do you gain from reading this section?

**Study 6:
Genesis 25:1-18**

Read Genesis 25:1-18

Comprehend

1. Who do we deal with in verses 1-6?

What do we notice about Abraham, and the way he deals with the covenant here?

2. In verses 7-11, what happens to Abraham?

What does this death 'achieve' - for his family, and for the land?

3. What familiar phrase kicks off verses 12-18?

Whose family line is this? How is it summed up in verse 18?

Consider

4. At the end of this section, what has happened to Abraham, and all of his sons not called Isaac?
5. How would you sum up the end of Abraham's life? Of the promise of God to him, what does he have?

What does this tell you about the promises of God?

10. What sort of down payment of God's promises do we have? (see Eph 1:13-14)
11. How does the Gift of the Spirit help us know that God will keep his promises to us?

Study 5: Genesis 24

Read Genesis 24.

Comprehend

1. Look at verses 1-9.
What do we learn of Abraham at this point?

What changes do you think have happened in him?

What is uppermost in his decision-making?

What is the timeframe given in verse 1?
2. When the servant arrives in the land, how does he mirror his master's attitude? (vs.12-14)
3. Who arrives—and where have we met her before? (vs.15; cf. 22:20-24)
4. How do events pan out, and how does that reassure us?
5. How does the servant respond? (vs.26-27)
6. How do events move, as Rebekah takes news back to the family?
7. As the servant recounts the events, how does he portray the mover behind all these things?

8. As Rebekah leaves her family, how are the events portrayed?
9. As Rebekah meets her husband-to-be, how is their union portrayed? (vs.67)

Consider

10. As we look at these events, whose hand is unavoidably present? Who supervises all these things?
11. Why is this so important to know?
12. How are these events crucial for the covenant God made with Abraham?

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13. What is reassuring about this penultimate picture we are given of Abraham?
14. What is reassuring about the way in which these events all play out?