

Genesis 12:10-Genesis 19

Genesis is as its name suggests: the beginning point of the story of God's work in the world to deal with human rebellion. The account begins with creation—people made in the image of God, to rule God's world in his way (by his words), enjoying the blessing of rest with him. The rebellion of humanity—sin—'replacing God with themselves—leads to the judgement of God and a damaged world and humans separated from God, under his just sentence of death. The rest of the Bible, then, is about God's work/plan to return humans—as his people—to what he intended: his mob, living with him, by his word.

Last year, we looked at Genesis 1:1-12:9. Several themes stood out:

- In the opening 12 chapters of Genesis, there is a cycle: humans rebel, God judges, God shows his mercy, and then the cycle starts again.
- Each time this cycle works, we see the spreading effects of sin in the world.
- The cycle reaches its climax with the Tower of Babel, after which there is a pause: where is the mercy of God?
- God's mercy is expressed in his promise to a man called Abram: that through this man, God will bring his resolution to the problem of human sin.
- The promise God makes to Abram is clear: he will give him land, family and through him, blessing to the world.
- As we worked through these opening chapters, we noticed another pattern—that God worked through a particular line of people. It was a line highlighted by the 'toledot' formula—where sections focussed on particular families.
- Now we are up to the 'toledot' of the family of Terah (11:27), at the heart of which is Abram and his wife Sarai, and the promise that God has made.
- The promise that God made to Abram is a 'covenant' - an agreement between two or more people. The significance of this covenant is that God does all the promising!

It is this covenant which is the focus for the rest of the book...

Recap study... Genesis 12:10-20

We do not know much of Abram's character at this point. In fact, all we do know of him is that he obeyed God. However, some events reveal the nature of a man—and this is one of those episodes...

1. Read Genesis 12:1-20.
2. What promises does God make to Abram?

What was it about Abram that made him so worthy of such significant promises?

3. Where is Abram? (12:10)

What causes him to leave?

Who is absent from Abram's decision-making in 12:10?

4. What is Abram's fear? (12:11-12)

What is Abram's 'brilliant' solution? (12:13)

Who is absent from Abram's brilliant plan? What has he jeopardized?

5. What happens in Egypt? (vs.14-15)

What happens to Abram? (vs.16) Is this a good thing?

6. Who suddenly appears in verse 17? What does he do?

What is Pharaoh's reaction? (vs.18-19)

What is the contrast between Pharaoh and Abram?
What does Abram have to say for himself?

7. What is the outcome in verse 20?

8. What does this episode reveal about Abram?

What does this episode reveal about God?

What pattern does this episode establish in the life of Abram's family? (cf.15:13-14)

9. In many ways, this revelation about Abram is a wonderful microscope of our lives when it comes to the promises of God. Abram is not so much a role-model of faith as a warning of fear. How does this episode expose things we need to work on when it comes to trusting God and his promises?

10. How does this episode help us identify a pattern in the actions of God in the world, and through the family of Abram?

Study 1: Genesis 13

Nephew Lot has been absent from chapter 12—he reappears in chapter 13. In many ways, this chapter establishes a pattern of behavior for God’s people—as well as the wisdom of modelling the generosity of God!

1. Read Genesis 13.
2. What do we learn about Abram in verses 1-2?
3. What do we learn about Abram’s journey in verses 3-4?

How is this different to the previous journey, in 12:10-20?

4. What tension, or troublesome situation, does Abram encounter in verses 5-7?

How might this have tempted him to change his view—again—about the promises of God about this land?

Why is Abram’s response different this time?

5. How does Abram solve the tension? (vs.8-9)

6. What is Lot's decision? (vs.10-11)

On what basis does he make his decision?

What is the basis, do you think, for Abram's behavior?

7. What is the outcome? (vs.12-13)

What does Lot find?

8. What does God reaffirm for Abram in verses 14-17?

What are the two key promises reaffirmed here?

9. Where does Abram settle, and what does he build? (vs.18)

10. Why do you think this story has such a different 'feel' than the one in 12:10-20?

11. What has changed (or, been reaffirmed) in Abram?

12. In many ways, there is a reminder here for us as we live under the promise of God. What might that reminder be?

Study 2: Genesis 14

1. Read Genesis 14.
2. What sense do you get from verses 1-7?

Why is this important?

3. What happens in verses 8-12?

How is this the consequence of chapter 13?

4. What does Abram do in verses 13-16?

How is this the consequence of chapter 13?

5. In verses 17-24, who does Abram meet on his way home?
6. The first king comes from where?

What does the first king offer Abram?

What is the point of this blessing?

How does Abram respond? What is the significance of this?

7. The second king comes from where?

What does this king offer Abram?

How does Abram respond? What is the significance of this?

8. Abram has displayed his ability to seize the land promised to him by force—he has just walloped the local kings! And yet, how does he deal with Melchizedek? What does this display about his approach to receiving the land?

The role of Melchizedek becomes significant throughout the Bible, especially as a man who combines the roles of priest and king. Who else combines these roles? How is our response to him the same as Abram's response to the promise of the land?

Study 3: Genesis 15

1. Read Genesis 15.
2. In verses 1-5, what is the problem for Abram?

What is God's reassurance?

What is God's 'evidence'?

3. What is Abram's response? (vs.6)
4. In verses 7-21, what is Abram's problem?

What is God's reassurance?

What is God's 'evidence'?

What do we learn about God's plans? (vs.13-16)

What is the climax of all this? (vs.18-21)

5. Looking at verse 6, what is the foundation for Abram's relationship with God?

Why is this so important?

6. Read Romans 4—why is this so important?

7. What is the foundation for our relationship with God? (cf. Ephesians 2:8-10)

What does this tell us about God's method of saving people, across the Bible?

8. How do we often get this wrong?

Why is it so important to get this right?

Study 4: Genesis 16

1. Read Genesis 16.
2. What is the problem of verses 1?
3. What is Sarai's solution? (vs.2)

Who does she seem to doubt?

4. What is the outcome in verses 3-4?

What is the criticism of Abram and Sarai implicit in verse 3b?

5. What does this event do for family relations? (vs.5-6)

What other Old Testament couple does the conversation between Abram and Sarai remind you of?

6. In verses 7-16, what do we learn about:
 - God?
 - Hagar?

- Ishmael?

7. At this point in Genesis, what have we learned about:

- God?

- Abram?

- Sarai?

- us?

- the way God relates to humans?

Study 5: Genesis 17

1. Read Genesis 17...
2. Read Genesis 15...

'The two stages of covenant-making, in chapters 15 and 17, not only tested Abram's faith by the long delay but brought out two sides of the one transaction. The earlier chapter fixed the basic pattern of grace and answering faith; nothing was asked of Abram but to believe and 'know of a surety'. Now emerge the implications, in depth and extension: in depth, for faith must show itself in utter dedication (vs.1); in extension, for the whole company must be sealed, one by one, down the generations (vs.10ff). Together then the two chapters set out the personal and corporate participation; the inward faith and outward seal (cf. Romans 4:9,11); imputed righteousness and expressed devotion (15:6; 17:1).'
Derek Kidner, Genesis, (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, IVP: 1967, Nottingham), p.139

3. How old is Abram? (vs.1)
4. What is God's clear command to Abram? (vs.1)

How did Abram respond? (vs.3)

5. In verses 4-8, what does God reaffirm as his commitment in this covenant?

What change is there for Abram?

6. In verses 9-14, what is to be the sign of this covenant?

7. What change happens to Sarai? (vs.15)

What does God reaffirm for her? (vs.16)

8. What do you make of Abraham's response and prayer in verses 17-18?

What do you make of God's response? (vs.19-22)

9. How do verses 23-27 display Abraham's right response to verse 1?

10. Read Romans 4:9-25...

How are Christians today the result of this covenant?

How can Christians today learn from this covenant-making in Genesis 15 and 17?

11. Write down one thing you have (re)learned in this study.

Write down one thing that you can apply from this study.

Write down one thing you can pray from this study.

Study 6: Genesis 18

1. Read Genesis 18:1-15.
2. What are we told straight away in verse 1?

I do not think that this is the appearance of the Trinity—it is the LORD accompanied by two angels (cf. vs.10, vs.22, vs.33; 19:1)

What is Abraham's response? (vs.1-8)

3. Who are these men looking for? (vs.9)

What does the LORD state in verse 10?

Why do you think we are given this account?

4. How does Sarah respond? (vs.11-12)

How does God respond? (vs.13-14)

We have known nothing of Sarah's faith—the focus has always been on Abraham's faith. Now, the LORD comes specifically to call Sarah to faith.

5. Read Genesis 18:16-33.
6. What is God's 'dilemma'? (vs.17-19)

What does God reveal in vs.20-21?

The image in vs.22 is of the LORD and Abraham standing together as 'friends' (cf. Is.41:8), watching the two angels depart to carry out the LORD's mission

7. What happens in vs.23-32?

What do you make of this interaction?

How does this shed light on vs.18?

8. How does Isaiah 53:12 show that Abraham here is a picture of Jesus?

How does 1 John 2:1-3 show how Jesus is greater than Abraham?

11. Write down one thing you have (re)learned in this study.

Write down one thing that you can apply from this study.

Write down one thing you can pray from this study.

Study 7: Genesis 19

There are a number of threads that come together in this account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The first thread is that of Lot—he chose to move near these towns in Genesis 13, thinking of it as the best land and refusing to see the moral trap it lay. The second thread is the judgement of God—it is a judgement revealed in Genesis 18. God himself says that he will not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if just 10 righteous people are found there. The third thread is the way in which the world wheedles its way into the mind of man, so that even the judgement of God cannot break through the self-delusion of man.

1. Read Genesis 19:1-29.

Where is Lot when the angels meet him? (vs.1)

What does Lot do for them? What does the meal suggest?

2. What is revealed about Sodom and Lot in the next episode? (vs.4-9)

What do we learn about the angels and God's plans? (vs.10-12)

How is this news received by Lot's wider family? (vs.14)

3. In verses 15-22, what is revealed about:
 - (i) God?
 - (ii) Lot?

4. What happens to the towns? What happens to Lot's wife?
(vs23-26)
5. In verses 27-29, what do we learn about Abraham and what do we learn about God?
6. Thinking through these verses, what do we learn from Lot?

Thinking through these verses, what do learn about the judgement of God?

Thinking through these verses, what do we learn about God's mob living in this world

7. Read Genesis 19:30-38.

What are your first impressions?

What happens to the nations named in verses 37-38?
(Think about Judges...)

8. Write down one thing you have (re)learned in this study.

Write down one thing that you can apply from this study.

Write down one thing you can pray from this study.

