

GOD'S GREAT CALL TO ABRAM (THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT, PART 2): THE GREAT PROMISES OF GOD GENESIS 12:01c–03

Introduction

There were three promises made to Abram, three very special promises. Note that these promises were conditional, and Abram had to do exactly what God demanded in order to receive them.

- => If Abram believed God and did what God said, he would receive the promises of God
=> If Abram did not believe God and refused to do what God said, he would not receive the promises of God

Abram had to believe God — believe God enough to obey, enough to separate from the world he knew — and follow after God and His promises. Another way to say the same thing is this: Abram had to believe God enough to make the supreme sacrifice to God, the sacrifice of himself. Abram had to sacrifice his life, his world, and all that he was and had. Abram had to totally give himself over to God. Abram had to surrender, submit, and deny himself: he had to totally commit his life to God. He had to die to self and seek after God with his whole heart.

If Abram believed and obeyed God that much, God would do these three very special things for him. These three things make up the message of this great passage: *God's Great Call to Abram (the Abrahamic Covenant, Part 2): The Great Promises of God*, Genesis 12:1c-3.

- I. God promised to give Abram *the promised land* (v. 1c).
- II. God promised to give Abram *the promised seed*, meaning a great nation of people (vv. 2-3).
- III. God promised to give Abram *the promised seed*, meaning the Messiah, the Saviour of the world: a special blessing to all the people on earth (v. 3b).

Note that God's promise to give *the promised seed* had a double meaning. It meant both...

- the seed of a great nation of people (vv. 2-3a).
- the seed of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, the LORD Jesus Christ Himself (v. 3b).

I. *Genesis 12:01c God's Promise to Give Abram the Promised Land*

God promised that He would give Abram *the promised land* (v. 1c). The Hebrew here actually says that God will *show* him the land, but verse seven tells us that God was actually promising the land to Abram. What land? God did not say; He did not identify the land. Note this:

=> The land was only promised: it lay out in the future; it was not to be immediately possessed. The land was just what believers have called it for centuries, *the promised land*. It was to be the great hope of Abram. This is the reason the land of Canaan is referred to as *the promised land*.

All Abram had to go on was the promise of God, on what God had said. Abram had to step out in faith and believe God's Word — His promise — about *the promised land*. Note several facts about this great promise to Abram.

1. *The promised land* definitely refers to Palestine, the land of Israel. This is clearly stated by God time and again.

a. Note God's promise to Abram.

Gen 12:6-7 *Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.*

Gen 13: 14-15, 17 *The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever...Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."*

Gen 15:7, 18-21 *He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."... On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."*

Gen 17:8 *"The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*

b. Note God's promise to Abram's son, Isaac.

Gen 26:3 *Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.*

c. Note God's promise to Abram's grandson, Jacob.

Gen 28:13 *There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying."*

Gen 35:12 *"The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."*

2. *The promised land* definitely refers to heaven; the promised land of Canaan is a symbol (a type, a picture, an illustration) of heaven, of God's promise to the believer that he will inherit heaven, the new heavens and earth. Note two facts:
 - a. God's promised land refers to *the whole world*. It is *the whole world* that Abram and believers are to *inherit*.

Rom 4:13 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

The inheritance of the whole world could only refer to the *new heavens and earth* — the new universe — that God is going to recreate in the end time. It could not refer to a corruptible universe that is deteriorating, wasting away and running down, and that would eventually cease to exist millions of years from now — cease to exist just by the natural process of time. (See notes, 2 Pet 3:1-18.)

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

Rev 21:1-4 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

Psa 102:25-27 *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.*

Isa 34:4 *All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree.*

Isa 51:6 *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.*

Isa 65:17 “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

Isa 66:22 “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.”

- b. God's promised land refers to a heavenly country and a heavenly city. It is a heavenly home — a heavenly country and city that are eternal — that Abram and believers are to inherit. Note how clearly Scripture states this:

Heb 11:8-10, 13-16 *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.... All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Heb 12:22 *But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.*

Heb 13:14 *For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

Rev 21:2-4 *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

Rev 21:10 *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*

3. *The promised land* represented many things to Abram.
- a. The promised land was the assurance of a *personal inheritance*: the possession of a new country, of his own property with all its good land, wealth, and rights. Abram believed that he would live in a new city within his own land and country — all given by God Himself. And the land was to be forever, for it was promised by the eternal God Himself.

Note this, for it is important: Abram's hope was for a permanent, eternal city and country. True, he was physically journeying all throughout the promised land of Canaan, believing that God was going to give him and his seed (descendants) the land of Canaan. But while he was journeying, his hope was for the permanent, eternal city and country of God. Abram knew that God's promised land referred to the heavenly as well as to the earthly land. Note how clearly Scripture states this:

Gen 13:15 *All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.*

⇒ God's promise included the eternal, permanent possession of the promised land, and Abram knew this.

Heb 11:9-10 *By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

⇒ This refers to the heavenly Jerusalem, the capital of the new heavens and earth (see Heb 12:22; 13:14. See pt. b. 2) above. Also see note, Rev 21:2.)

Heb 11:13-16 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

⇒ Note v.15: it clearly states that Abram's mind was on the heavenly and eternal country. If it had not been, he would have returned to his former home. He would have never wandered about, suffering the hardships he bore.

Thought 1. Note how the promise given to Abram parallels the promise given to the believer. Abram was to inherit *the promised land* if he turned away from the world and followed God. We are to inherit *the promised land of heaven* if we turn away from the world and follow God. *The promised land* is a symbol, a type, a picture of heaven.

(1) The promise given to Abram.

Gen 17:8 *"The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*

(2) The promise given to the believer.

John 14:1-3 *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

2 Cor 5:1 *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Heb 11:8-10 *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Heb 11:13-16 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

1 Pet 1:3-5 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you. Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Rev 22:14 *Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city [New Jerusalem].*

b. The promised land was the assurance of *conquest and rest, of spiritual victory and spiritual rest*. The promised land was to bring a God-given peace and security, freedom and liberty, deliverance and salvation to Abram. The promised land meant victory and rest to Abram, a God-given victory and rest...

- from having to wander about
- from never being settled
- from restlessness
- from being exposed to all kinds of trials, dangers, threats, attacks, slavery and bondage that comes from having no settled home within this world, from having no place that is given and protected by God Himself

To Abram, the promised land was the assurance of victory and rest, the conquest and triumph over all enemies, a victory and rest that was to be given by God Himself.

Thought 1. Note how the spiritual victory and rest promised Abram represents the spiritual rest promised the believer (see note, Heb 4:1).

(1) The promise given to Abram.

Gen 12:2-3 *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

Gen 15:1 *After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."*

Gen 22:17-18 *"I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies. And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

(2) The promise given to the believer.

Mat 11:29 *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

Rev 14:13 *Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour; for their deeds will follow them."*

Heb 4:1-3 *Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"*

Heb 4:11 *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

Exo 33:14 *The LORD replied, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."*

Psa 55:6 *I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest — I would flee far away and stay in the desert."*

Psa 116:7 *Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.*

Isa 28:12 *To whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose" — but they would not listen.*

- c. The promised land was the assurance of *God's own presence*, that is, of God's love, care, provision, and protection. Abram was bound to know this: if God was going to give him the promised land, then God must love and care for him. God would therefore provide and protect him no matter what lay ahead. God — His strong presence — would be with him through all the trials and struggles of life.

Thought 1. Abram's assurance of God's presence symbolizes the believer's experience. The believer can be assured of God's presence: of God's love, care, provision and protection.

(1) The promise given to Abram.

Gen 17:8 *"The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*

Gen 28:15 *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*

(2) The promise given to the believer.

Deut 20:1 *When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.*

Isa 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

Mat 6:33 *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

Mat 28:20 *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Heb 13:5 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

II. Genesis 12:02–03 God's Promise to Give Abram the Promised Seed: A Great Nation of People

God promised to give Abram the promised seed, to make him the father of a great nation and race of people (vv. 2-3a). God meant this both literally and spiritually. Note these facts:

1. God meant the promised seed to be *a physical and literal people*. Abram was to give birth to a new race of people: the Jews, the nation of Israel.
- a. Note the Old Testament references.

Gen 13:16 *"I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted."*

Gen 17:4-7 *"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."*

Gen 15:5 *He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars — if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."*

Gen 17:15-16 *God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."*

Gen 18:17-18 *Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him."*

Gen 22:17 *"I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies."*

Gen 25:23 *The LORD said to her [Rebekah, Abram's daughter-in-law], "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."*

Gen 28:14 *Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. (The promise is confirmed with Jacob, Abram's grandson).*

Gen 35:11 *And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. (The promise is again confirmed with Jacob, Abram's grandson).*

Gen 46:3 *"I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there." (The promise is again confirmed with Jacob, Abram's grandson).*

b. Note the New Testament references.

Acts 3:25 *And you [the children of Israel] are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'*

Acts 7:6 *God spoke to him in this way: 'For four hundred years your [Abraham's] descendants will be strangers in a country [Egypt] not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated.'*

Rom 9:4 *The people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.*

Heb 11:11-12 *And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.*

2. God meant the promised seed to be *a spiritual people*. Abram was to give birth to a new race of spiritual people: the people of faith, true and genuine believers who would follow after God and His promises. Believers of all nations are counted as *children of Abraham*. Note how clearly Scripture states this fact:

Rom 4:11 *And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.*

Rom 4:13-14 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless.*

Rom 4:16 *Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.*

Rom 4:23-25 *The words "it [righteousness] was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Gal 3:7 *Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.*

Gal 3:8 *Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."*

Gal 3:9 *So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

Gal 3:14 *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

Gal 3:26, 29 *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith....If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Gal 6:16 *Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule — to the Israel of God.*

The promised seed was a spiritual promise as well as a literal promise. This double meaning must always be kept in mind when reading or studying *the promised seed* given to Abram.

- ⇒ Note the Old Testament references above (the first point), the promise that Abram's seed would number as the stars of the sky and as the grains of sand by the seashore (Gen 13:16; 15:5). Literally, this could never be fulfilled if it referred only to one physical nation of people upon earth. There must, therefore, be a double reference. The promise must refer to all believers of *all nations* down through all centuries and

millenniums of human history. And history must last a long time, continue on and on so that more and more people can trust Christ and become followers of God and His promise. (What a challenge to get out and bear witness to our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ!)

- => Note all the Scriptures above: spiritually, Abram was to be the father of all who believe the promises of God. He was the first person since The Flood and Noah — within the new world — to believe and commit his life to the promises of God; thus Abram was to be the father of all those who followed him in believing the promises. All who walk in the steps of the faith of Abram are counted as his children, as the children of faith, and are to spiritually receive the very same promises made to Abram (Rom 4:11-12. See notes, Rom 4:11-12; 4:13.)
3. Remember that Abram and Sarah had no children, although they had been married for years. Physically, they were incapable of bearing children. How then could a nation of people be born of Abram when he could not even father one child? Only by God. God alone could quicken the seed of Abram and the womb of Sarah and give them a child whose descendants would grow into a great nation of people. God and God alone could fulfil the promises being made to Abram. Abram's task was to believe God, believe that God would fulfil His promise by doing exactly what He said.
 4. Note that God made *four personal promises* to Abram and to the promised seed, the great nation of people that Abram was to father.
 - a. God promised *to bless Abram* (v. 2). God's blessing means His love, presence, protection, and provision. This means that God was going to look after and care for Abram and the great people Abram was to father. God was going to grant...
 - His love to assure them
 - His presence to guide them
 - His provision to take care of them
 - His protection to secure them

Thought 1. Note how the very same blessings are given to believers, to all those who follow Abram in believing the promises of God.

Exo 23:25 *Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

2 Chr 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*

Psa 91:4 *He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

Mat 6:33 *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

Exo 33:14 *The LORD replied, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."*

1 John 5:4-5 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

1 Pet 1:5 *Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

b. God promised to *make Abram's name great*. Abram is without question one of the greatest men who has ever lived.

1) The greatness of Abram's name is clearly seen in *secular history*.

=> Abram gave rise to both the Jewish and Arab nations of the earth. Both peoples trace their ancestry back to Abram and call him *the father* of their people.

=> Abram was to become *the father* of kings (Gen 17:6), and Sarah the mother of nations and kings (Gen 17:16).

=> Abram was known as a *mighty prince* by the surrounding nations even in his day (Gen 21:22-34; 23:6).

=> Abram was also known as a *prophet of God* (Gen 20:7).

2) But more than secular history, Abram's name is great in the *annals of faith*. All believers (all those who understand that Abram is the father of faith) honour Abram. The very name of Abram is synonymous with faith. All truly great men, even if they are unbelievers, have something in which they staunchly believe; and Abram was no exception. He believed the impossible and never staggered in his faith. The name of Abram is great, first and foremost, because he believed God — the promises of God, the Word of God — and he diligently sought after God.

Isa 56:5 *To them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever.*

Rev 3:12 *Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.*

3) The memory of Abram's name is precious (great) to believers because they know this: if they follow after the glorious promises given to Abram, then the great inheritance given to Abram will also become their inheritance.

Rom 4:13, 16 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith....Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it [righteousness] may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.*

Heb 11:8-10 *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Heb 11:13-16 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Isa 56:5 *To them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever.*

- c. God promised *to make Abram a blessing to others*. Abram has been a blessing to the earth in at least two significant ways.
 - 1) Abram has given two great peoples to the earth: the Jews and the Arabs. These nations of people, as all others, have not always lived up to their duty as responsible people. Nevertheless, the life and acts of *responsible* Jews and Arabs are a blessing to the earth.
 - 2) Abram has blessed the earth with a great example of faith, perhaps the greatest of examples. Abram believed God against all odds.
 - => He believed God for *the promised land* even when he knew nothing about the land, not even where it was; and he continued to believe God for the land all through his life, even though he never possessed a single acre.
 - => He believed God for *the promised seed* — a great nation of people — when it was humanly impossible for him and his dear wife to have a child.
 - => He believed God for *the promised seed* — the Saviour — even though he had been living the most undeserving life when God first called him to turn away from the world and follow God. This we shall see in the next note.

Again, Abram has blessed the earth with a great example of faith, the greatest of examples.

Rom 4:20-21 *Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

- d. God promised to *protect and make Abram secure* as he followed after God and His promises (v. 3a). Keep in mind that the promises being given to Abram have a double reference: the promises refer to Abram personally, but they also apply to his descendants, spiritually. Very simply stated, God promised to bless the person who blessed Abram and his descendants, and to curse the person who cursed Abram and his descendants. Who are the people who bless and curse Abram and believers?
- => The person who blesses is a person who either *approves or accepts* Abram's journey of faith. Some persons would approve Abram's decision to follow God and His promises, although they might not accept God themselves nor agree with Abram. But they would wish him well — give their blessing — as he journeyed to the promised land. Other persons would go farther and accept Abram's decision to follow God and His promises. They themselves might even accept God and join Abram in his journey of faith. They, too, would bless Abram and everyone else who was following after God and His promises.
- => The person who curses is a person who *disapproves and rejects*, and in some cases fights against, Abram and his decision to follow God and His promises.

This was a great promise to Abram, and it is a great promise to everyone who begins the journey of faith, who truly follows after God and His promises. God promises to protect all believers as they journey toward the promised land. Any person who opposes them and their faith will be cursed, that is, defeated and doomed to failure. But all who wish them well will be blessed. The faith of all believers — both Abram and those who follow after him — will be rewarded: they shall all be victorious and reach their destination, the promised land itself. God will fulfil His promise to Abram and his descendants, the people of faith.

2 Chr 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*

Psa 34:7 *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.*

Psa 91:4-5 *He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day.*

Psa 112:7 *They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in*

the LORD.

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

Mat 5:10-12 *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

Mat 10:22 *"All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

1 Tim 4:10 *That is why we labour and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, and especially of those who believe.*

Heb 11:24-26 *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

III. Genesis 12:03 God's Promise to Give Abram the Promised Seed: The Messiah, the Saviour of the World

God promised to give Abram the promised seed, meaning the Messiah, the Saviour of the world (v. 3c).

=> In Abram, all the families of the earth were to be blessed

God was choosing Abram to bless the whole earth — all the families of the earth — with the promised seed, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. How do we know this? From Scripture: Scripture clearly tells us that this is a reference to the Messiah, the LORD Jesus Christ. This will be seen in a moment. But common logic and reason also tells us that *the promised seed* is a reference to the Messiah. Just think: this is a blessing so great that it blesses all the families upon earth, all the families who have lived or ever will live. A blessing this great could only refer to the Saviour. Only God Himself — through His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ — could do something so great that it would literally bless every single family upon earth throughout all the generations of human history. Note several facts about this great promise to Abram.

1. This is the second time the Bible clearly predicts the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised seed, the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

=> The first clear prophecy was given in Gen 3:15.

Gen 3:15 “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*”

⇒ Now, the second clear prophecy is given in Gen 12:3.

Gen 12:3 “*And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*”

2. As stated above, Scripture tells us exactly what God meant in this promise: this is a direct — very specific — reference to the promised seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

a. Note the Old Testament references.

1) God gave the promise of the Saviour at least three times to Abram.

Gen 12:3 “*And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*”

Gen 18:17-18 *Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.”*

Gen 22:18 “*And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.*”

2) God confirmed the promise of the Saviour to Isaac, Abram's son.

Gen 26:3-4 *I will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.*

3) God also confirmed the promise of the Saviour to Jacob.

Gen 28:14 *Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.*

b) Note the New Testament references and interpretation.

1) The first New Testament reference is Acts 3:25. Peter preached this glorious fact: Jesus Christ fulfilled the covenant given to Abraham and the other godly fathers of history. What covenant? The covenant of *the promised seed*, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would bless people and turn them away from their wicked ways. Note this clear declaration:

Acts 3:25-36 *And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.*

2) The second New Testament reference is Rom 4:3. The verse declares this wonderful fact: Abraham was counted righteous — justified — because he believed the promise of God. What promise?

=> The promise of the Saviour, *the promised seed*, who would forgive sin and cover wickedness (Rom 4:7-8 22-25).

=> The promise that he would inherit the whole earth (have a part in the new heavens and earth) — an inheritance so great that it could come only through the Saviour, the promised seed (Rom 4.13. cp. Heb 11:8-10, 13-16; 2 Pet 3:7-15; Rev 21:1f).

Note how clearly Paul stated the fact: Abraham's faith in the promise of God led God to count him righteous (justified before God).

Rom 4:3 *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Gen 15:6 *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

3) The third New Testament reference is Gal 3:8. This verse explains a surprising fact: the promise of the promised seed *actually contained the gospel*. The gospel of Jesus Christ was actually being preached to Abraham when God promised to give him the promised seed.

Gal 3:8 *Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (cp. vv. 6-9).*

4) The fourth New Testament reference is Gal 3:16. This verse gives a clear explanation: the promise of the seed is singular, not plural. The promised seed does not refer to many persons, but to one person, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Messiah of the world.

Gal 3:16 *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.*

Note this also: a person can only become a child of God's — Abram's seed (descendant) — and inherit the promise made to Abram, by faith in Christ, by believing and trusting Him.

Gal 3:26, 29 *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith....If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

5) The fifth New Testament reference is Gal 3:13-14. This Scripture declares a striking fact: the blessing of Abraham — the promised seed — includes redemption and the promise of God's Spirit. The great promise of Abraham's blessing (the promised seed) was the promise of redemption, of being delivered from sin and from the curse of the law with its guilt and punishment.

Gal 3:13-14 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in*

order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

3. The call of Abram and the promise made to him was unique, different from the call and promises given to others before his time. How? God called Abram to father a whole new race of people, a people who were to carry on the godly line of believers and eventually bear the promised seed, the Saviour and Messiah of the world.

From the very beginning of human history, beginning with Adam, God had promised to send the promised seed through the godly line of Adam and Seth. Time and again God had to intervene to keep the godly line pure, and this He did right up to *The Great Flood*. At that time God chose Noah, and later the line of Shem, to carry on the godly line of people, keeping the hope of the promised seed and Saviour alive.

This is the very thing we see in the call and appointment of Abram. The human race had once again deteriorated into utter depravity (Gen 11:1-32). Thus God was intervening in human history. As stated above, He was calling and appointing Abram to father a whole new race of people, a people who were to carry on the godly line and give birth to the promised seed and Saviour of the world. Note this: God had at least five purposes for creating a new race of people through Abram. (See *Israel, God's Special People*, John 4:22; *Jews, the Seed of Abraham*, Rom 4:1-25; and *Israel*, Luke 1:68.) Note that the same five purposes are true of both Israel as a nation and believers as the new nation and people of God.

- a. God wanted a people who would love and worship God supremely, a people who would give Him their first loyalty.

Gen 17:7 *I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.*

Deut 6:5 *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

Deut 10:12 *And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Isa 43:10 *"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me."*

Mat 22:37 *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."*

- b. God wanted a people who would be His missionary force to the world, a people who would be a dynamic witness to all other nations that God and God alone was the only true and living God.

Gen 12:3 *“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

Gen 22:18 *“And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”*

Isa 43:10-11 *“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no saviour.”*

Acts 13:26, 47 *Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent.... For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”*

- c. God wanted a people through whom He could send His Son to the world: God wanted a people through whom He could send the promised seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Messiah of the world.

Gen 3:15 *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

Gen 22:18 *And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.*

Gal 3:16 *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.*

John 4:22 *“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.” [God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, came through the Jews.]*

- d. God wanted a people through whom He could give His written Word, the Holy Bible, to the world.

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

Rom 9:4-5 *The people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*

Heb 1:1 *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.*

1 Pet 1:10-11 *Concerning the salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

2 Pet 1:19-21 *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

- e. God wanted a people through whom He could demonstrate several things to the world. Note that all three of these were demonstrated throughout the history of Israel. (See notes, Eph 1:3; 1:7; 2:8-9; 2:11-18.)
- 1) God wanted to demonstrate that *life and salvation are not of this world*, not of the physical and material world. The world is passing away: it possesses a seed of corruption and does not last; it is not permanent and eternal. The world desperately needs to acknowledge and learn this fact. (See *Disease, Corruption* Mat 8:17; note, 1 Cor 15:50; and *Sin, Death, Corruption*, 2 Pet 1:4.)

Psa 102:25-26 *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.*

Isa 24:4 *The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish.*

Isa 34:4 *All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree.*

Isa 51:6 *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.*

1 Cor 15:50 *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

2 Cor 4:18 *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

2 Pet 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear*

with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Rev 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

- 2) God wanted to demonstrate that *life and salvation are spiritual and eternal*. A permanent and incorruptible seed — a new creature, a new man — was necessary in order to provide salvation and life for man. The world needed to know that whatever God did, He did permanently and perfectly. Thus life and salvation are not to be of this earth, of physical and material elements (which last only for a few short years). Therefore, life had to be of the spirit — of another dimension of being entirely — in order to be forever and permanent. (See note, Eph 1:3.)

John 3:3, 5 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.".... Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

- 3) God wanted to demonstrate that *life and salvation are secured by faith and by faith alone*, not by works and self-righteousness. (See note, Eph 2:8-10.)

Eph 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ■*