

Genesis, Session 10: Abraham's Calling and the Promises of God (Genesis 11:27-12:3)

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Abstract

The lecture introduces the narrative of Abraham, transitioning from the universal history of humanity in Genesis 1-11 to the specific history of the patriarchs beginning with Terah's genealogy. Dr. Mathews explains that God's focal attention on Abraham's family serves as the remedy for the brokenness of human sin and the broken relationships initiated in the Garden of Eden. The lecture highlights the thematic structure of the covenant—specifically the three-fold promise of land, offspring, and blessing—and details how Abraham's geographical journeys mirror his internal spiritual journey of faith. Additionally, the source traces the structural connections across Genesis, illustrating how the five-fold covenantal blessing directly counteracts the five-fold curses of early human history.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Patriarchal Narratives (Genesis 11:27–12:3)

- A. Transition from universal human history (Genesis 1–11) to specific patriarchal history (Genesis 12–50)
- B. The genealogy of Terah as a structural hinge and binding device
- C. The slower pace of the patriarchal narrative compared to creation and the fall
- D. Purpose of focal attention on Abraham: God's remedy to the sin problem and broken relationships

II. The Importance and Character of Abraham

- A. Abraham as the matrix and linkage between Genesis 1-11 and 12-50
- B. Born in the post-flood world; father of the Hebrews
- C. Mesopotamian lineage and identity as a traveler, migrant, and sojourner
- D. Comparison of Abraham's narrative weight to Isaac (brief hinge), Jacob, and Joseph

III. The Covenant as the Overarching Theme

- A. The concept of covenant as a binding relationship

B. Major markers of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis:

1. Chapter 12:1-3: Classic expression of promises (one-way covenant based on elective love)
2. Chapter 15: Ritual of the covenant
3. Chapter 17: Circumcision as the sign of the covenant
4. Chapter 22: Abraham's confirmation of the covenant through obedience

C. Interpretation of Genesis as a prelude/introduction to the Pentateuch (Torah)**IV. The Three-Fold Promise: Land, Offspring, and Blessing****A. Definition of Theme vs. Motif (dominant color pattern vs. minor contributing elements)****B. The partial fulfillment of promises in the Pentateuch****C. The three strands of promise:**

1. Land (territory)
2. Progeny (offspring/population/lineage)
3. Blessing (presupposing a relationship with God)

D. Continuity with creation and garden promises:

1. Creation blessing: Relationship, procreation, and stewardship/dominion
2. Garden blessing: Relationship with Yahweh, procreation (offspring of woman), and land (Eden/garden)

V. Abraham's Journey of Faith**A. Geographical journeys (homeland to Canaan, Egypt, and back) reflecting his spiritual journey of faith****B. The life of Abraham as a school of training (ups and downs of faith and faithfulness)****C. Definition of faith (Hebrews 11): Confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what is unseen; trusting based on knowledge and experience****D. Abraham believing God (Genesis 15:6) credited as righteousness****E. Relinquishing the past (leaving country/comfort zone in Chapter 12) and yielding the future (offering Isaac in Chapter 22)****F. The test of Isaac on Mount Moriah: Loving the Giver more than the gift****VI. Historical and Chronological Background (Genesis 11:27-31)****A. Terah's family: Abram, Nahor, Haran, and nephew Lot****B. Locations: Ur of the Chaldeans (southern Mesopotamia) and Haran (northwest area/Syria)****C. Key narrative obstacles: Sarai's barrenness and Lot as a potential heir****D. Sethite-Noahic genealogy linking early human history to Abraham****E. Chronology of Abraham's calling: Merging of callings/revelations in Ur and Haran (telescoping in Acts 7)**

VII. Covenant Promises as a Counter-Response to Human Depravity (Genesis 12:1-3)

- A.** Genesis 12:1-3 as potential resolution to the table of nations (70 nations)
- B.** The reversal of curse into blessing
- C.** The mathematical design of five blessings countering five curses in chapters 1-11:
 - 1.** Five curses in Genesis 1-11: Serpent (ch. 3), ground (ch. 3), Cain (ch. 4), ground again (ch. 8/flood), Canaan (ch. 9)
 - 2.** Five occurrences of "bless/blessing/blessed" in Genesis 12:1-3 as a reversal of these curses