

{Slide: Logo - The Promises}

3 - The Promises

Today is the third lesson in our Journey series.

The First lesson looked at the **Problem** that is sin and how it was introduced at the Fall and how it affects us to this day.

The Second lesson looked at the **People** that God has been preparing since the Fall and that as a Christian who has made Jesus Lord we are part of that nation.

Today we are going to look at the **Promise** and how at the Fall, God had already been at work on our redemption.

What is a promise?

It's a statement of fact that something will happen in the future.

Like with a child, we may say something like, "if you behave yourself at this event, we will go and get ice cream afterward".

As parents we usually follow through, but sometimes, circumstances change and we don't.

(Story of phone call from Malasia

To this day, we still have not gone on a holiday with the kids to make up for that time.)

What does it feel like when someone does not follow through?

We feel cheated.

Because to some extent, when someone promises something, we feel we have a claim of ownership, I can taste the ice cream, there is a pleasure in anticipation and when you don't follow through, it feels like something physical has been taken away.

Even as if the physical object of the promise has been taken away, even though I never had it.

A little bizarre.

And therefore, be careful what you promise.

God also made some promises.

{Slide: 1) God's promises}

1) God's promises

{Slide: Gen 12v1-3}

Gen 12v1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

*²"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*

*³I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth*

will be blessed through you."

And then He continues a little further in Gen 17

{Slide: Gen 17v6-8}

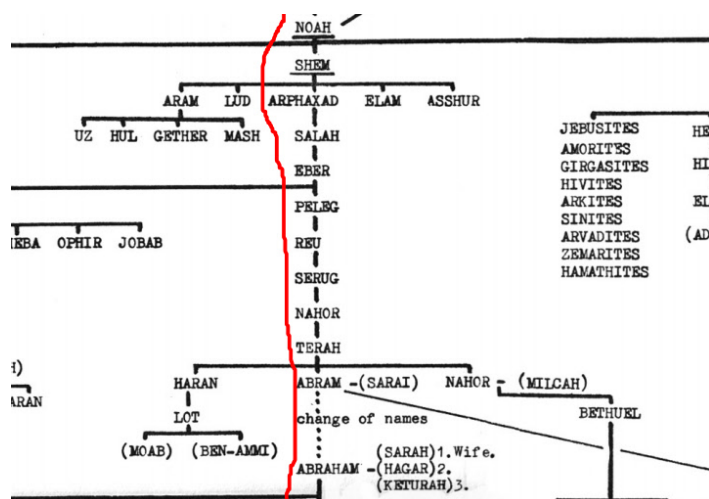
Gen 17v6-8

⁶I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and **kings will come from you.** ⁷I 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. 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."**

Remember where we are in the genealogy.

We had Adam and Eve and a few more generations and then God brought on the flood and God started again with Noah.

{Slide: Noah to Abraham}



Gen 6 - God tells Noah to build an Ark

Gen 7 - Noah and his family enter the ark and the waters come

Gen 8 - They survive the ordeal and step on dry land

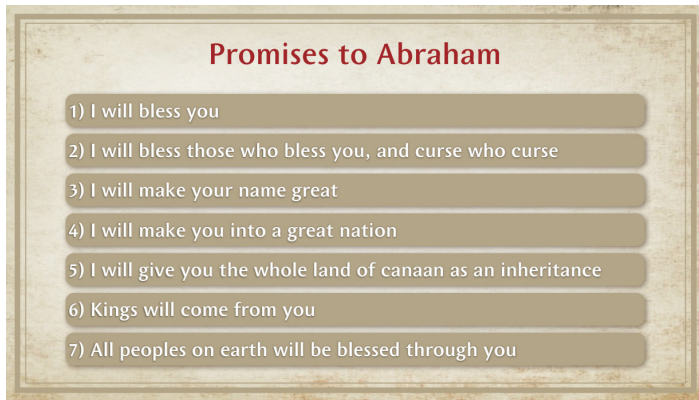
Gen 9 - God makes a covenant with Noah and tells him to be fruitful, which he is.

And a few generations later we land at Gen 12 with Abraham.

This is the very start of the people journey, that we discussed last week.

God makes Abraham seven promises.

{Slide: The seven promises}



(Side note: the differences in the word “curse”, there is a nuance lost in translation)

God promises Abraham that “everyone who curses him” מְקַלְלֶיךָ (*mekalelcha*) will be in turn “be cursed” אָאָר (*aor*). The strength of this promise, however, is lost in translation. The first word for “curses” מְקַלְלֶיךָ (*mekalelcha*) comes from a root that literally means “to make light of something heavy.”

The second word for “curse,” אָאָר (*aor*) actually comes from a completely different root that means something like “to utterly destroy.” Taking these insights from Hebrew into consideration, the translation could be presented as follows: “I will bless those who bless you, but the one who disrespects you, I will utterly destroy.”)

We have the seven promises.

I now want to filter the books of the Bible a little.

We are all used to seeing the Bible in a particular way, Genesis to Revelations.

66 books, just like God gave it to us.

Let’s look at the Bible in a different way.

Let’s manipulate the way we know and understand history, just a little.

We can divide the Bible roughly into three broad categories

History - Within those books, some can be considered **Historical**, they tell us a story

Prophetic - Some can be considered **Prophetic or address other things**, they tell us about the future or give us insight into specific situations

Doctrine - And some can be considered as **Doctrine**, they advise us on specific topics.

We are going to focus on the History books, In the Old Testament, the **Historical** books, those that tell a story are:

{Slide: OT Historic books}



The **Prophetic** books would include Job, Psa, Pro, Ecc, Sos, Isa, Jer, Lam, Eze, Dan and the minor prophets

The rest of the New Testament books address particular situations within the story and can be considered **Doctrine**.

In the New Testament, the books that tell a story are Mat, Mar, Luk, Joh and Acts.
When we add them to the OT, then the list looks like this.

{Slide: All Historic books}



That leaves us with 22 books.

If we remove those with lesser significance or have repetition.

If we just want the story of the Bible.

Books like Chronicles which is essentially a repeat, Esther and Ruth in the OT

And Matthew, Mark, and John in the NT,

we are left with 15 books which we are going to arrange in the following fashion:

{Slide: Pic 6 - Historical, what is needed}

| HISTORICAL - What is needed? | |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Genesis | 1 Samuel |
| | 2 Samuel |
| Exodus | 1 Kings |
| Leviticus | 2 Kings |
| Numbers | |
| Deuteronomy | Ezra |
| | Nehemiah |
| Joshua | |
| Judges | Luke |
| | Acts |

If you want to know the **story** of the Bible, these are the only books you need to read.

Remember last week.

We spoke about nation development.

Let's add that to our big picture view of the Bible.

{Slide: Pic 7 - Historical, nation development}

| HISTORICAL - What is needed? | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|-----------------------|
| Genesis | GOD'S PEOPLE FORMED | 1 Samuel | |
| | | 2 Samuel | GOD'S PEOPLE BLESSED |
| Exodus | | 1 Kings | |
| Leviticus | | 2 Kings | |
| Numbers | GOD'S NATION DEVELOPED | | |
| Deuteronomy | | Ezra | GOD'S PEOPLE RETURNED |
| | | Nehemiah | |
| Joshua | | Luke | |
| Judges | GOD'S NATION ESTABLISHED | Acts | |

Remember this grouping and let's go back to God making seven promises to Abraham. We have the privilege of hindsight and so we can see what Abraham couldn't. He just had to believe, have faith.

So let's continue our journey and see how these promises played out.

{Slide: 2) Promises unfolding}

2) Promises unfolding

Promise 1 I will bless you

What does it mean to bless?

To bestow divine favour.

How does that play out?

Depends on what form the favour takes.

In Abraham's time it was seen like this.

{Slide: Gen 24v34-36}

Gen 24v34-36

³⁴So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵**The LORD has blessed** my master abundantly, and he has become **wealthy**. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶My master's wife Sarah has **borne him a son** in her old age, and he has **given him everything he owns**.

Abraham lived 175 years.

{Slide: Logo - The Promises}

Promise 2

I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse

Many people who were connected to Abraham were blessed.

Let's just run through some of his closest connections.

Lot - Abraham's nephew, Benefited just by living in Abraham's shadow, chose the good land, happened to be close to Sodom, captured by marauding kings, rescued by Abraham, settles in Sodom, his family the only people saved when Sodom was destroyed.

Sarah - King Abimelech - Hagar and Ishmael - the servant who went to get a wife for Isaac - Isaac himself

Promise 3

I will make your name great

And God did.

So great in fact that it is more globally accepted and respected than Jesus himself.

- Christians recognize him as the father of faith
- Jews recognize him as their patriarch even though they don't recognize Jesus as the Messiah
- In Islam he is not only considered a prophet but also the archetype of the perfect Muslim
- Even in the Bahai faith, he is considered the highest religious station

Promise 4

I will make you into a great nation

That is what we looked at last week, nation development.

What elements make a nation?

People - Leadership - Money - Independence - Government - Law - Culture - Military - Faith - Land

God painstakingly builds this nation up piece by piece giving them everything they need to succeed.

Promise 5

I will give you the land that you will possess forever

Joshua tells the story of the history of Israel, in Joshua 24, starting with Terah, the father of Abraham of how God fulfilled the promise.

{Slide: Jos 24v13-14}

Jos 24v13-14

¹³*So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.'*

¹⁴***Now** fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.*

This passage comes at the end of a history lesson to remind the Israelites of their past. And in V13 he explains the fifth promise, "*I will give you the land...*", by explaining to them how little preparation was required by them.

And in V14 he says, "*Now*", encourages them to do what they need to do, "*fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness*".

For me there is a great lesson in these words because they ring across the centuries into our congregation this morning. The Israelites had as a whole complained and grumbled and at the point of entering the land, were left with a few faithful members of the original group, Caleb and Joshua.

God was grinding away at building the nation in spite of the people.

Then I have to take a step back from these words and apply the same lesson to myself and read the words in my own context and they should go something like:

{Slide: My version 1}

So I (the Lord) gave you (Marc), a place of salvation with a congregation, a body of Christ, a group of fellow believers, which you did not work for,

What did I do to deserve to get to this point, or any point in my walk with God?

Nothing.

God called me and taught me and surrounded me with what I needed.

Because the little I contribute is only in answer to the much that has been given

{Slide: My version 2}

Now

fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness

Throw away, all those things that slow you down and prevent you from giving your whole heart to me, ***and serve the LORD, NOT MAN.***

When I get to the point where I understand that

Because it may take me a while to get there, if ever.

When I get to the point where I realise:

- My very presence here is a privilege, NOT, they're lucky to have me
- Having people willing to give input in my life is a privilege, NOT, I'll call you when I think I need help.
- "God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Eph 2v10), NOT, the church owes me because ...

And we can go on, but it doesn't take long for divisive attitudes to start forming in my own head, when I lose sight of how I got here in the first place.

Imagine God thought, because Marc keeps complaining I'm just going to let him live his life out, here in this desert, maybe his kids will be more faithful.

What work did the Israelites or us have to do at this point, other than obey?

Not a thing, we all received it for nothing.

The reason I think that God does it for nothing, is that if we did the smallest smidgin of work towards it we would start thinking we deserve something for what we did.

God however does it all out of love.

Time to renew convictions

Make hard decisions

{Slide: Logo - The Promises}

Promise 6

Kings will come from you

This promise, through the lens of history, we know to be true.

King Saul and David and Solomon and all the rest.

Let's take some advice from the greatest of them all, maybe this is why God considered him a man after his own heart.

{Slide: Psa 105v1-8 + V37 + V42=V45}

Psa 105

¹Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

²**Sing** to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.

³Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD **rejoice**.

⁴**Look to the LORD** and his strength;
seek his face always.

⁵**Remember** the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

⁶you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.

⁷He is the LORD our God;

his judgments are in all the earth.

⁸*He remembers his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,*

³⁷*He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold,
and from among their tribes no one faltered.*

⁴²*For he remembered his holy promise
given to his servant Abraham.*

⁴³*He brought out his people with rejoicing,
his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

⁴⁴*he gave them the lands of the nations,
and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—*

⁴⁵*that they might keep his precepts
and observe his laws.*

Praise the LORD.ⁿ

David clearly understood his past, his history, where his people came from.
God remembers His promises and He delivers on them.
For nothing in return
Purely out of love for His people.

{Slide: Logo - The Promises}

Maybe the strength of our convictions is linked to how well we remember our past.

Where we came from

What has been done **for** us, for free, for nothing

And conversely, the less we remember

The less grateful we become, because we start thinking we got where we are under our own steam.

The weaker our current conviction.

David quotes the promise as reminder of conviction, why to have faith

Gives us a list of things we are to do.

Sing - Tell - Rejoice - Look to the Lord - Seek - Remember

Why?

Because we forget.

When we forget what has happened in the past, we start to question God.

We start wondering currently **if He has our best interests at heart,**

because we live in the moment

just like the people did on their journey to the promised land (I'm hungry now)

just like Adam and Eve did when confronted by the choice (I want it now), fruit and the knowledge of good and evil or no fruit and trust God's command not to eat.

We have to remember our story.

We have more things to remember than any people ever.
To remember we have to know what that story is.
Because in that story we find out :
why there is a **Problem**,
why God built a nation, a **People** and
why we can rely on God's **Promises**.

Hundreds of years later, Nehemiah repeated the same lesson

{Slide: Neh 9v7-8}

Neh 9v7-8 + v15-17

*⁷“You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. ⁸You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. **You have kept your promise because you are righteous.***

¹⁵In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

*¹⁶“But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and they did not obey your commands. ¹⁷They refused to listen and failed to **remember** the miracles you performed among them.*

Are you starting to pick up the pattern here.
God came through for the people, He played His part.
He kept looking after them.
In spite of all of that, our ancestors became arrogant and disobeyed, and why
They failed to remember the story they were part of,
The miracles He had performed,
The Promises He had made
And what God had done for them.
The fact that God had kept His promises because HE was righteous.
They succumbed to their human nature.

Why do we need the OT?
To remember God's faithfulness.
To read the stories and realise that God has always come through, not necessarily on our time.

And so we come to the New Testament.
One promise is still outstanding.

{Slide: 3) Promises fulfilled}

3) Promises fulfilled

Promise 7

The whole earth will be blessed

Do people still remember the promises, seeing as thousands of years have passed since they were originally made.

Cue Acts 3, Peter heals a man lamed from birth, the people are astonished and come rushing across to where he and John were standing.

Peter uses the occasion and gives them a history lesson, his own people, fellow Jews, get a history from Peter, fellow Jew.

Why you have to ask, did they not have the same history?

Of course they did, they just needed to be reminded.

{Slide: Act 3v24-26}

Act 3v24-26

*²⁴“Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵And 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.**’” ²⁶When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”*

Oh yes, that history, now they remember.

And then persecution breaks out in Acts 8 and the Bible says, “*Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went*”.

And the rest of the world starts being blessed as well.

And yes, that same history, the one we must remember because we are the children, the recipients of that promise, part of the, “*all peoples on earth*”.

Paul helps us understand the expansion of the blessing.

{Slide: Act 13v26}

Act 13v26

²⁶“Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent.

Not just the Israelites.

Literally meaning all nations.

Remember how we listed the Historical books, those that tell a story.

This is what that list looks like when we add the promises.

{Slide: Pic 8 - Historical promises approach}

| HISTORICAL BOOKS - Promises Approach | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Genesis | 1) Bless you | 1 Samuel | |
| | 2) Bless who bless | 2 Samuel | |
| Exodus | 3) Name great | 1 Kings | 6) Kings from you |
| Leviticus | | 2 Kings | |
| Numbers | 4) Great nation | | |
| Deuteronomy | | Luke | 7) Earth blessed |
| Joshua | | Acts | |
| Judges | 5) Promised land | | |
| Ezra | | | |
| Nehemiah | | | |

These seven promises unfold and are fulfilled throughout the whole Bible. We can actually name the books and time periods associated with each promise.

- 1) I will bless you - **Genesis**
- 2) I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse - **Genesis**
- 3) I will make your name great - **starts in Genesis**
- 4) I will make you into a great nation - **Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**
- 5) I will give you the land that you will possess forever - **Joshua, Judges, Ezra, Nehemiah**
- 6) Kings will come from you - **Samuel, Kings**
- 7) The whole earth will be blessed - **Luke, Acts**

When someone promises something and they fulfill their promise it builds our faith in them.

In the same way, the continuity of these promises that God gave Abraham, builds our faith.

Don't you feel like leaping out of your chairs and rushing out and telling people about what God has been doing and promising and fulfilling since the dawn of Biblical man.

God makes a promise to Abraham.

That promise plays out in the books of the Old Testament.

Great leaders like David and Nehemiah held on to those promises.

Peter remembered those promises.

Paul's mission was the fulfillment of the final promise, the one that affects you and me.

{Slide: Act 13v32}

Act 13v32

³²"We tell you the good news: **What God promised** our ancestors ³³**he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.** As it is written in the second Psalm:

"You are my son;
today I have become your father."^o

What point is being made here?

Look at the sequence - **God's promises - are fulfilled - in Jesus.**

And that is how our faith is built up.

Through a God who is consistent, persistent, never wavering in His mission of calling us back to Him, through a relationship with Him, who promises and fulfills those promises.

{Slide: Logo - The Promises}

We started with the **Problem** of sin and it's effects on us today.

We looked at how God started answering the Problem by building a **People**, a nation and how we are the culmination of that Promise today.

Today we looked at the **Promises** that God has been fulfilling since the beginning and how they reach through the OT to find fulfillment in us today.

And sets us up for our last and final journey next week, the journey of **Perfection**.