

# Sermon Outline

## THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

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### HOPE FOR THE NATIONS

*(Genesis 12:1-3)*

#### I. The Globalization of Blessing

#### II. Abram of Ur

- A. Before looking at Genesis 12:1-3, we need to understand the background of Abram.
- B. By the time we reach Genesis 12, tragedy had already struck.
  - 1. Our first parents disobeyed God and abandoned their position of service.
  - 2. Instead of submitting to God's plans for them, they wanted to be their own gods.
  - 3. God expelled them from his sacred garden.  
—From that point on, the human race could no longer be counted on to advance the Kingdom of God.
- C. But one of the earliest glimmers of hope was the promise that God made to Abram in Genesis 12.  
—God says that he will bless the nations of the world through Abram's family.
- D. When we come to Genesis 12, the human race had grown immensely, building towns and cities wherever they went.
- E. Since the human race no longer worshiped the Lord God, many of their cities ended up being dedicated to other gods, who were in reality demons.
- F. One of the great cities of man was Ur of the Chaldeans.
  - 1. The great city of Ur was located some 300 kilometers southeast of what is now the city of Baghdad in Iraq.
  - 2. In 2000 BC, Ur was a prominent city, known for its peace and prosperity.
  - 3. Like many major cities of the time, Ur was dedicated to a god.  
—Ur's deity was Nanna, the Babylonian god of the moon.
- G. Abram had his origins in this city that worshiped the moon god.
  - 1. He came from a family of three sons (Gen 11).
  - 2. He came from a family that worshiped idols (Josh 24:2).

- H. God's Word is clear that demons were behind the idols (Dt 32:17).  
—Since humanity had rejected the Lord as God, God had given the human race over to their sinful desires and to evil spiritual powers (Rom 1:24; Eph 6:12).

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What has happened to mankind's relationship with God by the time we reach Genesis 12? (2) Which city did Abram come from? Which part of the world was it? (3) What light does Joshua 24:2 shed on Abram's family?

### III. "Now the LORD Said to Abram" (Genesis 12:1)

- A. But God has a plan to save the human race from sin and false gods.  
B. God chooses a man to work with—Abram.  
C. Abram's family may have been in Haran when the Lord spoke to Abram (Gen 11:31).  
D. But what is of greater importance is how God's speech is presented to us: "Now the LORD said to Abram..."
1. Where have we heard this language before?
    - a. We heard it in Genesis 1, the week of creation.
    - b. We heard it in Genesis 11:6, just before God confused the languages at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:6).
  2. Given how these words always come before something very important, whether creation or judgment, we sit up and take notice right away.  
*—What is the Lord going to do now? Will the word of the Lord bring peace or judgment?*
  3. But we sense that the Lord is going to bring good news this time, because the man to whom he speaks is a descendant of Shem.
    - a. Although Abram is a worshiper of false gods, he is also a descendant of Shem, the good son of the prophet Noah.
    - b. Noah had promised Shem that YHWH will be his God (Gen 9:26-27).
    - c. If Abram descended from Shem, it means that this time, God may well have words of blessing and not punishment.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the significance of the phrase, "Now the LORD said to Abram"? Where have we heard this language before? When was the last time such language was used, prior to Genesis 12:1? (2) Why do we sense that the Lord's Word will bring good news this time?

#### IV. The Lord Instructs Abram to “Go” (Genesis 12:1)

- A. The Lord has essentially two words for Abram.
- B. The first is an instruction to “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”
- C. To appreciate what God is saying here, we need to put ourselves in Abram’s shoes.
  - 1. If Abram came from a family of idol worshipers, it’s unlikely that he had a good understanding of the one true God.
  - 2. Even if Abram knew who YHWH was, he may have worshiped YHWH along with many other gods.
  - 3. Abram was most likely not expecting YHWH to address him.
  - 4. But YHWH spoke to Abram in such a way that Abram was moved to obey (Gen 12:4).
- D. God instructs Abram to leave country and family, and go to where God wants him.
  - 1. This is a major command with many implications for Abram’s life.
    - a. God had not yet shown Abram where he wants him to go.  
—Abram has to go by faith, trusting only in God’s Word.
    - b. Abram is instructed to leave his extended family and his own father.  
—This would mean that Abram relinquishes his inheritance.
  - 2. The fact that God can command such things of Abram shows that YHWH is even more important than one’s family.
  - 3. In our Confucian society, the family is the most basic institution of society.
  - 4. By calling Abram to leave his father’s household, God is teaching Abram and us that the most important principle in life is not family, but the Lord God.
  - 5. Genesis 12:1 is therefore an application of the Great Commandment (Dt 6:4) into Abram’s life.
- E. Where is God applying this Great Commandment into our own lives today?
  - 1. What are some of the things that we hold on to so tightly that our love for God is stifled?
    - a. It could be the fear of the consequences of becoming Christian.
    - b. It could be our fear of the future.
    - c. It could be our favorite sins.

2. By calling Abram to leave his country and his father's house, God was calling Abram to put aside his idols and his idol-worshipping culture, and to seek after God first.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the first word that God gives to Abram? What does God instruct Abram to do? (2) Why do we say that God is applying his Great Commandment (Dt 6:4) to Abram in Genesis 12:1? (3) Where is God applying the Great Commandment in your life? Where is he calling you to love him more?

## V. The Lord Promises Greatness to Abram (Genesis 12:2-3)

- A. While the first word was an instruction, the second is a word of promise.
- B. The first part of God's promise: "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (v 2)
  1. God promises Abram that he would make him into a "great nation."
  2. Abram will become a famous man. God will raise his reputation.
- C. But Abram's greatness is a means to an end—Abram "will be a blessing."
- D. We do not know exactly how Abram will be a blessing at this point.  
—Since this episode comes right after the tower of Babel incident, we suspect that this blessing would somehow counteract the effects of that traumatic event.
- E. Another clue suggesting that we are on the right trail is God's promise to make Abram's name great.
  1. The last time we encountered the notion of man becoming great was back at the tower of Babel.
  2. In Genesis 11:14, the reason for the tower was this: "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and *let us make a name for ourselves*, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."  
—Glory and security, fame and survival, were the motives behind the idolatrous tower.
  3. When God promises Abram that he will make his name great, we cannot help but make the connection between the scattering of the human race in Genesis 11 and the calling of Abram in Genesis 12.
    - a. In Genesis 11, God judges the human race for its arrogance, for wanting honor and security without God.
    - b. In Genesis 12, God reveals the solution to his own judgment.  
—God himself will restore honor and safety to the human race by means of his chosen man, Abram.

- F. The second part of God's promise: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (v 3).
1. God will care for Abram and his family, and ensure its survival.  
—The God of the universe assumes responsibility for this one household!
  2. God will bless the nations through Abram.  
—Abram will be the point man, the human liaison, whom God would use to reconcile the nations to himself.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the second word that God says to Abram? (2) What is the first promise that God gives to Abram? (3) Since God's call to Abram comes shortly after the judgment at Babel, what kind of blessing will Abram bring to the world?

## VI. Abram and the Savior of the World

- A. How do God's words to Abram connect with Christ the Savior of the world?
- B. The reason Abram can be a blessing to the nations is because Christ will come from him.
- C. Through Jesus, the great Descendant of Abram, God will re-gather the nations to himself.
  1. This truth is shown in Galatians.
    - a. Galatians 3:14: ...“in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles...”
    - b. Galatians 3:29: “And if you are Christ's, then *you are Abraham's offspring...*”
  2. If you believe in Christ, God considers you a true son or daughter of Abram, regardless of your race or culture.
- D. Therefore, all the blessings that God promised to Abram's children are also yours.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does Abram relate to Christ? How is Abram able to bring blessing to the world? (2) According to Galatians 3:14, 29, what happens when we believe in Christ? (3) Do you consider yourself a child of Abram? How does this impact you?

## VII. Keeping the Promise

Since God has promised blessing to the nations through Abram, especially through Abram's descendant our Lord Jesus Christ, you and I need to submit to this divine promise and allow it to rule our lives.

- A. There are two great challenges facing the children of Abram today:
  - 1. Postmodernity leads some to believe that there is not one way to ultimate blessing.
  - 2. Traditionalism places strong emphasis on harmony and unity, sometimes to the extent of denying radical faithfulness to God.—Both attitudes are strong in Singaporean society.
- B. As Christians, we must ultimately reject the solutions (or “gospels”) given by Postmodern and Traditional Man.
  - 1. The solutions of Postmodernity and Traditionalism are all versions of the tower of Babel.
  - 2. They seek glory and security for mankind *apart from God*.
- C. God is building his own holy society through Christ, Abram's greatest descendant.  
—God wants each person to be secure and restored to honor—but only in Jesus Christ.
- D. As children of Abram, we must be ruled by God's promise to our forefather. This involves...
  - 1. Guarding the promise of God by faithful transmission.
  - 2. Enduring the loneliness of faithful living (Heb 11:13).
  - 3. Keeping the vision of the Eternal City in front of us (Heb 11:10).

“For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations,  
whose designer and builder is God.”  
(Hebrews 11:10)

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are two challenges facing Abraham's children today? What are the challenges posed by Postmodernism and Traditionalism to our faith in Christ? (2) Why are Postmodernity and Traditionalism versions of the tower of Babel? (3) What does it mean to be ruled by God's promise? (4) What does it mean to guard the promise “by faithful transmission”? (5) Why does living by the promise require us to endure loneliness? (6) How does keeping the vision of the Eternal City sustain us? How do we keep this vision always on our minds?