

## God's Promises—Part 2

*Genesis 12:1-3 NKJ*

*"Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*"I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled" (Jeremiah 1:12 NIV).*

God spoke to Abraham when he was 75 years old, telling him to move from his country to a land He was going to show him. Abraham obeyed and moved without having details of where he was going. God promised Abraham that he would make him a great nation and bless all the families of the earth through him. At this point in his life, he had no child, because his wife Sarah, who was about 65 years old, was barren.

When Abraham arrived at the place (Canaan), God spoke to him and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." Yet, Sarah was still barren. The Lord who promised knew the appointed time; He is never late. God has an appointed time for you; all you need are faith, obedience, and patience. Now, when Abraham was about 99 years old, the Lord spoke to him again, saying that his wife Sarah would conceive and bear a son, Isaac, and He would establish His everlasting covenant through Isaac and his descendants. The following year, Sarah at the age of 90 years old bore Isaac, just as the Lord proclaimed. God watches over His word to perform it.

Abraham's faith was tested by God—God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Without asking or reminding God about what He had said concerning establishing His everlasting covenant through Isaac, Abraham rose on the morning of the next day prepared to offer Isaac. What a tough situation! I wonder what was going through his mind. But Abraham believed that God was able to raise him from the dead. They arrived on the third day at Mount Moriah, where he was to offer Isaac. Abraham told his servants to stay with the donkey while he and Isaac went to worship and said they would return. What a strong faith! When Isaac asked his father where the lamb was for the burnt offering, he simply said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."

Abraham now built an altar, bound his son, and placed him on the altar. He took his knife to slay him, and then an angel of the Lord told Abraham not to slay him. Abraham now saw a ram caught by the horns for offering instead of Isaac. Abraham called the place Jehovah—Jireh (God our Provider). Because of Abraham's obedience, God now reaffirmed his promises: "I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:17-18).

Although God's promises to Abraham were unconditional, faith and obedience were still necessary. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son" (Hebrews 11:17). You and I must be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises of God (Hebrews 6:12).

Isaac, with whose offspring God would establish the Abrahamic covenant, married at 40 years old, and his wife Rebecca was barren. After Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, she became pregnant with twins, and bore Esau and Jacob when Isaac was 60 years old. While the twins were still in the womb, the two struggled together, and their mother enquired of the Lord, who told her that the elder would serve the younger. This meant God was going to continue his everlasting covenant with Abraham through Jacob, despite the custom back then that the first son by a lawful wife inherited the major share of tangible and intangible property—birthright.

There was parental favoritism in the family: Isaac favored Esau, and Rebecca favored Jacob. When Isaac was preparing to confer the family blessing on Esau, Rebecca connived and deceived Isaac into believing he was with Esau when it was Jacob—so Jacob received the family blessing. Rebecca didn't have to lie and cheat to gain what she wanted, because God had said, "The older will serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). In choosing deceit, Rebecca so provoked Esau's hostility that Jacob, her favorite, was forced to flee. All her scheming did was deprive her of her favorite son for 20 years of her life.

At times we try to help God, but do it in an unrighteous way, instead of waiting on God's timing. The end never justifies adopting sinful means. God's word will always prevail, no matter how long it tarries. In the book of Numbers, we read that "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

Jacob's family moved to Egypt when there was severe famine in Canaan, because Joseph, the eleventh son, had been sold into slavery by his brothers. Joseph had become a governor in Egypt and oversaw the sale of grain to the people. After the death of Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation, the Egyptians enslaved Israel for over four hundred years until God set them free. Moses, the man of God, led them out of Egypt.

As Jacob's descendants journeyed back to the Promised Land, they came to Moab. The Moabites were afraid of the Israelites, and Balak, the king of the Moabites, called on Balaam to put a curse on the children of Israel, so that he could fight them and drive them away. But God said to Balaam, "You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed." The mouth of the Lord had pronounced blessing on Jacob and his descendants, and no one can change God's word. As followers of Jesus Christ, God has blessed you, and you don't have to fear anyone trying to curse you. "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" (Galatians 3:13).

Hear what God said concerning Jacob in Numbers: "I have not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among

them" (Numbers 23:21). Was Jacob pure? No! But God forgives sin, if only we run back to Him. (Psalm 32:1) "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Glory be to God! Jesus didn't just cover our sins, but blotted them away. Our sins are completely washed in His sinless blood.

Now, in the processes of time, after 42 generations from Abraham to Jesus, God's promise of blessing all the families of the earth through him came to fruition. An angel of the Lord appeared to a young virgin, Mary, and told her, "You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Matthew 1:31-33).

Mary was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus was born in Bethlehem as foretold by the prophet Micah (5:2). When Jesus was about 33 years old, he gave up His life for the families of the whole earth. God made His only perfect Son to bear the sins of the whole world, and that perfectly satisfied His requirement and standard for our righteousness. It is written in His Holy Word: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

How do you share in this universal blessing? By becoming a family member of God. How do you become a family member? By confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9). Again, the Bible says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

Come to Jesus today, don't delay! Tomorrow is not promised.