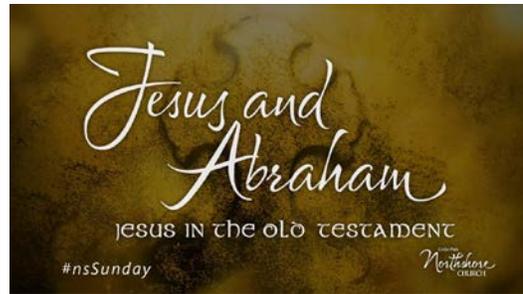


Jesus and Abraham

We are continuing now with the second sermon in our new series: Jesus in the Old Testament. A series that will take us right up to Thanksgiving, revealing God's plan and promise from the very beginning... culminated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



While our focus in this series is the Old Testament, let's begin by reading a portion of the New Testament together: John 8:51-58.

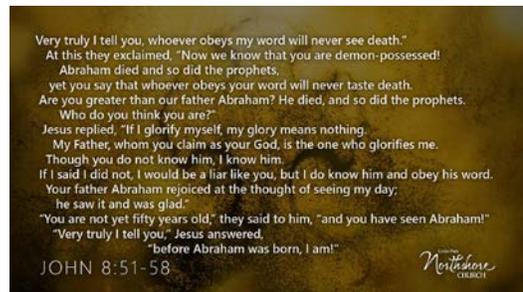
⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death."

⁵² At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷ "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

⁵⁸ "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"¹



I don't know how we can read the New Testament, specifically the gospels, and while reading the red letters sometimes wonder, "What is Jesus talking about?"

Those around him clearly didn't always understand Him... and sometimes they went ahead and blurted it out... Jesus, what are you talking about?

This is the case in the New Testament passage for today.

¹ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Jn 8:51-58). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

John chapter 8 is dominated by arguments about the identity of Jesus. Some supposed He was just another imposter, making unsubstantiated claims. Some hinted that He was an illegitimate child, hearing that there was some concern over His paternity. Others said He was demon possessed. But the most serious accusation was that Jesus was a blasphemer. Jesus made clear claims that in His words were the answers and His hands were eternal life. Furthermore, Jesus made claims of Divinity, the He was indeed God.

That is why those who heard Jesus say what we just read responded by picking up stones to stone him; the punishment for blasphemy was death.

Throughout chapter 8 of the Gospel of John, Jesus was making claims of eternal life, and these claims were preposterous to those around Him. So, to refute the claim, they went to **authority**.

In the home in which I grew up, ultimate authority rested in one place... the recliner in the family room directly across from the television. The seat of ultimate authority was my father's seat. **Father** and **authority** were synonymous.

So, naturally, the Jews refuting Jesus would go to authority, the authority of Father Abraham.

⁵² At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" ²

Why Father Abraham?

- Why not Father Shem?
- Or Father Noah?
- Or, especially, Father Adam?

² *The New International Version*. (2011). (Jn 8:52–53). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Abraham was the recipient of The **Promise**.

Abraham was the Father of Promise

- Promise of a Nation
- Promise of a Homeland
- Promise of a Messiah



There are vitally important distinctions between **Promise** and mere **Prediction**. In this series, we would miss the mark if we merely thought of what we find in the Old Testament as prediction; it is promise.

Promise –vs– Prediction

- Not merely recorded utterances of a psychic or seer
 - Those in the context of the Old Testament took this rather seriously, stoning those who were proven to not be speaking on behalf of God
- Active: Not merely passive
 - Not like predicting the weather.
 - Not like a stock tip
- Timeless: We're not looking at historical events and then discovering how they were **there all the time** (Nostradamus Speaks... sorry, just a bunch o' baloney, an astrologer who followers admit that they can't tell what he predicted until after it happened).
- Prediction is about **what**. Promise is about a **who**.
 - To somebody
 - From somebody... who can deliver

So... if somehow you got the idea that we are trying to say “isn't the Bible *neat* because it has all these predictions that came true?” You're really missing the point.

We're not talking about mere prediction for our amusement; we are demonstrating how God revealed His plan by delivering on His promises.

The passages regarding promise to Abraham are powerful

The Divine Promise to Abraham (Genesis) – six specific **passages**

- **Calling** [12:1-3, 7](#)
- **Abundance** [13:14-18](#)
- **Care** [15:4,5,13-18](#)
- **Covenant** [17:1-8](#)
- **Power** [18:17-19](#)
- **Faithfulness** [22:15-18](#)



The same promises were reaffirmed to **Isaac** and again to **Jacob**

God's Eight **Promises** to Abraham

1. He would make him into a great nation
2. He would bless him
3. He would make his name great
4. Abraham and his seed would be a blessing to others
5. God would bless those who blessed him
6. He would curse those who cursed him
7. Through Abraham and his seed God would be the channel of blessing to all the peoples on earth
8. God would give Abraham's seed the land

When we read these passages, we see that the recurring, key idea is that Abraham's seed (offspring) will be a blessing to all people. More specifically, God will bless **through** Abraham's seed.

This word, seed, has a double meaning for us: DNA, and offspring.

- **DNA:** All of the essence of the promise (result, outcome) packed in the seed.
- **Offspring:** The multiplied generations that would follow.

Kaiser: "The most succinct statement of God's plan" is contained in **Genesis 12:3**. Kaiser describes this as the backbone of the Old Testament.

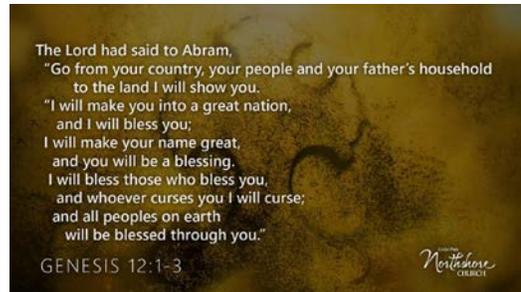
The Call of Abram

12 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.” ³



The Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, or more generally the entire Old Testament, is held together by **purpose**. It is held together by **promise**. It is driven and directed by **this** promise: all people will be blessed.

Promise is the backbone of the Bible.

There are all sorts of ways to approach the Bible (history, literature, theology, etc.); the best way to approach the Bible is promise.

What we are seeing here in Genesis 12 are the basic building blocks of promise. The seed that contains the DNA for the full revelation of God’s plan. This seed is not the entire Gospel... but it is the seed.

What, specifically, are we talking about here? Where, specifically, are we seeing **Jesus** in the context of the life of Abraham?

³ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ge 12:1–3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Through your offspring (or seed) all nations will be blessed?

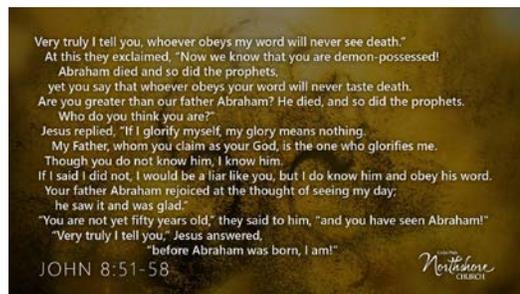
- Mixing of Human and Divine
 - Parallel Tracks? (God or a Man)
 - Foreshadow of the God-Man Jesus
- Purpose regarding lineage
 - Not an “unfair narrowing of privilege”
 - A conduit of blessing to all people (missions)
 - A people of God, fulfilled through the mission of God, first through a family, then through faith in all people
- Not a work of the patriarchs... a gift from God

What did Jesus mean in John 8?

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

⁵⁷ “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

⁵⁸ “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”⁴



First, Jesus was saying that Abraham rejoiced in the **I Am**. Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing the day when the I Am overwhelmed human history, stepping into time to rescue:

- When everything else is stripped away... I Am (Exodus 3:14)
- Faithful, Dependable, Trustworthy
- The Covenant Maker and Keeper
- The Pre-existent
- The All Encompassing
- The Eternal

Yes, Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing the day of Jesus, the Messiah. But for Abraham, the promise was more than just an aspiration or theology, more than thoughts or dreams. Abraham had an encounter with God, an encounter that resulted in rejoicing, that furthered illustrated the Promise of God.

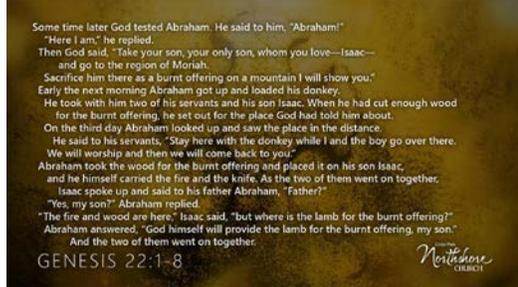
The account is in Genesis 22.

⁴ The New International Version. (2011). (Jn 8:56–58). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

² Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” ⁵



Abraham, having received the promise that blessing would come through his seed (Isaac, the son of promise), was now faced with this request... the sacrifice of his only begotten son (sound familiar)?

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” ⁶

There are those who read the Bible and see *child abuse*. They see the Gospel as child abuse (that God would sacrifice His son), and they see this passage as child abuse (that Abraham would so obediently respond to the voice he was hearing). But look carefully at what Abraham said to his servants: “We will worship and then we will come back to you.” Abraham knew that God had promised, and that God could be trusted to keep His promise. Whatever God had in mind, by faith Abraham was convinced it would not end on Mount Moriah... just as God’s plan did not end on Mount Calvary.

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. ⁷

God will provide the Lamb. God can be trusted to fulfill His promise.

⁵ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ge 22:1–2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁶ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ge 22:3–5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

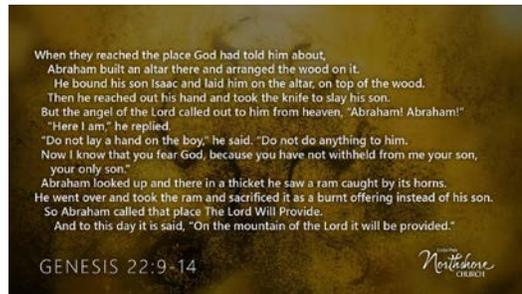
⁷ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ge 22:6–8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

¹² “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.” ⁸



God told Abraham that consecrating the promise would take the sacrifice of a son

So he proceeded... and God provided

- There was a sacrifice... blood
- Preceded by obedience

Consecrating the promise did take the sacrifice of **The Son**

- Not Isaac... but a son of Isaac... the Son of Promise

In every promise made to Abraham, Jesus was in the mind of God.

And on Mount Moriah that day, the ram caught in the thicket was a symbol for the spotless Lamb of God that would be sacrificed on Mount Calvary.

When Abraham heard the angel and saw that ram, he rejoiced that day because God provided for worship, the sacrifice required by God was provided by God. Abraham worshiped Jehovah Jireh, God the Provider.

⁸ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ge 22:9–14). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

And what Abraham saw that day was a symbol of the promise of God. But in the Gospel it wasn't merely a sacrifice of worship for that day, but a sacrifice of blessing and deliverance for all people for all time. The sacrifice required by God was provided by God. In a very real way, what Abraham saw in real, yet dramatic form on Mount Moriah was a glimpse of what God would accomplish through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Have you received God's promise for blessing?

God's promise for a Messiah?

God's promise for deliverance from sin?

God's promise for eternity with Him?

Our God has provided His Son, and we are called to believe that Promise, and receive that Promise.

When God made that Promise to Abraham, God included all people... and you my friend, and I, are included in all people. The all-knowing, all-powerful One, had you in mind when He spoke that promise. Can you believe today? Will you respond to the Promise, receiving it maybe for the first time today? Can you join me in allowing God to press that Promise even deeper into our hearts and minds?

