

God Builds a Nation

The Story—part 2

September 18, 2016

The Story: God wants to be with us. Our greatest happiness is to be found in walking with Him, and reflecting His love and character to those around us.

DAY 1: Main Idea: God builds a new nation to reveal God and God's plan to get us back.

1. What could be done about fallen human nature? How would mankind ever see the value of knowing God and living for Him? Perhaps if the nations saw how God's personal and special involvement with one nation might be the proof that mankind needed!

Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go 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.*

³ *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

2. Instead of *starting* with an existing nation, God decides to *build* a new nation, starting with one couple.

3. God starts by having Abram move from Haran to what as we'd come to know as the Promised Land.

4. These verses comprise what theologians call the "Abrahamic Covenant." Underline each of the promises.

5. Why does God want to bless *this* nation?

6. What should the surrounding nations conclude by watching God's interaction with the Hebrews? (v. 12)

7. The key verse in God's covenant is v. 3. How could "**all nations** be blessed through" Abram?

8. What Abram probably did not know at the time was that the "blessing" "through you" was to be the Messiah, a savior that could be the savior (a blessing) to all the nations! What is astounding is that the lineage of Jesus Christ is traced back, generation by generation to Abram!

9. God's Story is going to unfold over the next two thousand years through Old Testament history where over one hundred prophecies meet their match in the birth, person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

DAY 2: God building faith and trust in fallen human nature

1. The promise to Abram and Sarai is that they will have a son through whom the promise will come. Eight Years pass without Sarai getting pregnant. Both of them were getting nervous about getting pregnant. At last, God speaks! What would He say?

Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

2. If you had been Abram would those words have helped you?

Genesis 15:2 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"

³And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

3. Did Abram “hear” what God said? What *should* have been Abram’s response?

Genesis 15:4 Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."

4. God “sort of” answers the concerns of Abram, but also sort of not. What is God trying to do in Abram?

Genesis 15:5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

5. Sounds a lot like Genesis 12.

6. How would Abram respond?

Genesis 15:6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

7. This is one of the great moments in Old Testament history. Abram becomes a man who trusts God more than he trusts what he can pull off or his circumstances.

8. Do you see a similarity in how God deals with you, in order to build your faith and trust?

DAY 3: Taking faith “back”

1. Ten years have passed since the Genesis 12 promise of a son to come. Sarai’s faith wavers, then goes in the tank.

Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

2. When delay comes to our desires and our prayers, it’s easy to take matters into your own hands. How does Sarai justify her suggestion to Abram committing adultery?

Genesis 16:3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

3. Notice that what started out as adultery now includes polygamy!

Genesis 16:4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

4. They dysfunction spirals ever downward.

Genesis 16:5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

5. And downward again dysfunction descends. The awful face of fallen human nature sinks ever lower.

6. Instead of Abram handling this whole situation with faith and strength, he responds with personal weakness in sleeping with Hagar and relational weakness in dealing with Sarai.

Genesis 16:6 "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

7. This fateful decision will have historical repercussions throughout human history in the continued turmoil in the middle east.

8. If you were God, how would you be evaluating the progress of The Story?

DAY 4: Only God could have done this!

1. When the Abrahamic Covenant was made, Abram was seventy-five, and Sarai was sixty-five years old.
2. By the time we get to Genesis 18, Abram is ninety-nine and Sarai is eighty-nine. From a human point of view, all hope of the promise being fulfilled of a nation, let alone a son seems dead!

Genesis 18:1 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.

² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

³ He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.

⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.

⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way--now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread."

⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

⁹ "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said.

¹⁰ Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

3. In previous chapters, God clearly spoke to Abram. In this chapter God “appears” in the form of three men. They have the first detailed news about the long-awaited pregnancy. This is twenty-four years after the initial promise of Genesis 12.

Genesis 18:11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

4. Sarah is in her tent, believing the visitors not only can't hear her, but can't read her mind/thoughts.

Genesis 18:13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

5. What is it like to scoff at God?

Genesis 18:15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

6. The visitors confront Sarah about her laughing and she lies.

7. Why this delay for twenty-four years? One important reason is that when the promised son is born, there will be NO doubt that God brought it about. Abraham and Sarah, at 100 and 90 respectively, are promised their own child. Sarai laughs at this preposterous word of the LORD and the supernatural boy who is born to them is named Isaac which means “laughter.”

DAY 5: God's severe test

Genesis 22:1 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, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

1. If you had been Abraham, what would your responses have been?

Genesis 22:3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled 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 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.

2. What things do you see in Abraham's righteous response?

Genesis 22:9 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."

3. To "fear" the Lord means to put him first in your life. It is to value Him above everything and everyone else. It means to obey Him even in the hardest of times.

Genesis 22:13 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."

4. This is not the first time we have encountered (a) a sacrificial offering for sin, and (b) a substitutionary sacrifice for sin!

God takes this amazing moment to reiterate and fill in more of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Genesis 22:15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

- *¹⁷ I will surely bless you and ...*
- *make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.*
- *Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,*
- *¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

5. God will continue to work in our lives until we finally value Him over anything and everyone else.

6. What has been your biggest take away from the life of Abraham?