

# **THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY**

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Chris Katulka, A Promise He's Keeping, Part 3

Genesis 12:1-3

For the past few weeks we've been looking at God's promise to Abraham in a series called A Promise He's Keeping. We are looking at how this promise made 4000 years ago still has an effect on our lives as believers today!

I wanted to talk about the Abrahamic Covenant because all of our convictions at the Friends of Israel stem from this eternal promise.

First, we looked at the promise that God deeded the land of Israel to the Jewish people, that's why we teach about the significance of the land of Israel (past, present, and future) and why we stand in solidarity with the nation of Israel today.

Second, we talked about the promise that God made to Abraham that he would be the father to many descendants, and in particular - ONE descendant of Abraham that would change the course of human history, His name is Jesus. This is why we strive at the Friends of Israel to communicate the truth about the Messiah Jesus effectively to all people.

Finally, today we look at the universal nature of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Blessing.

So far every element of the Abrahamic Covenant we've examined (Land and Descendants) has been directed to Abraham for the benefit of the Jewish people. Yet, what is often overlooked concerning this amazing promise is that God designed and implemented this covenant for the benefit of ALL mankind! If you are a believer in Jesus the Messiah in many ways you are beneficiary of this grand promise.

God said to Abraham, "...And so you [Abraham] shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:2-3).

What did God mean when He told Abraham he and his descendants would be a blessing?

God wanted Abraham to know that his name and his descendants would always be known as a people associated with what it meant to be blessed by God. So if anyone was ever searching for what it meant to be blessed by God Abraham and his descendants would be the prime example.

With this understanding of “blessing” in mind I like the way the New English Translation (NET) translates Genesis 12:2, “... I will bless you [Abraham], and I will make your name great, so that you [Abraham] will exemplify divine blessing.” This carries the idea that Israel is an example of what God’s blessing really looks like.

God wanted to use Abraham and his descendants as a tiny mirror to reflect the immensity of God’s grace to a lost and broken world. The Lord strategically placed that tiny mirror in the land of Israel on purpose.

See all the civilizations of antiquity passed through this small plot of land in the Middle East in order to get from one area of the world to the other, it’s a natural land bridge between modern day Europe, Turkey, Russia, and the Middle East to get to places like Egypt and Northern Africa. That’s why every major historical empire wanted to control it (Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans) and sought to conquer it. The reason, Israel is an ancient toll road and every civilization needed to pass through it to trade their goods to other countries. In an age prior to internet, telephones, and even the printing press, God wanted to use the land He promised to Abraham as a place to announce to the world that regularly traveled through that He is the one and only Sovereign God and the Lord’s mouthpiece would be the Jewish

people. Instead of the Jewish people going out to the world, God was bringing the world to them!

I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse.

God's promise to Abraham was established on this premise, that if he leaves Ur, the country of his family, God is with him (not a bad deal). God united Himself to Abraham through this covenant, so... anyone who enriches Abraham or his descendants benefits from that blessing, that is God blesses them.

On the other hand, anyone who "curses" Abraham has God to answer to. When you look at Genesis 12:3 you'll notice the word curse is translated twice "and the one who curses you I will curse" each "curse" is actually a different Hebrew word. Genesis 12:3, but The first "curse" in Genesis 12:3 literally means "to take lightly". God is saying to Abraham if anyone take this covenant lightly and mistreats you I will curse them because when you mistreat Abraham or his descendants they mistreat God. The second "curse" in Genesis 12:3 means "to banish, or remove from blessing". Again the New English Translation (NET) translates this verse, "I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse."

If the covenant made with Abraham is eternal in nature than we must assume this aspect of this promise still applies today. That is, God does not take lightly His covenant with Abraham. I believe this comes across in Paul's letter to the Romans when he tells even the church, "... do not be arrogant toward the branches [Israel]; but if you [church] are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root [Abrahamic Covenant]. but the root supports you" (Rom. 11:18).

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

The Abrahamic Covenant is not a static promise that remains in the book of Genesis, it's purpose flows all throughout the Scriptures (OT & NT) and does not solely benefit the Jewish people, but is designed to bless all the families of the earth.

I'll give you two ways the Abrahamic Covenant has blessed us. First, God communicated His Word through the promised descendants of Abraham. The Bible you and I read during church, devotions, bible studies, and Sunday schools was promulgated through the Jewish people. Everyday His Word encourages, corrects, teaches, and reveals to us more about the character of God and His Son, Jesus. That's a blessing!

Second, through the Abrahamic Covenant God promised to send one particular descendant that would change my life forever, Jesus. Jesus, according to the Scriptures, is the promised Messiah who fulfilled all the prophecies spoken by the Jewish prophets. He lived a perfect life, He died a sacrificial death according to the Law, and it was by His blood that we've been set free from sin (Rev. 1:5). He was resurrected from the dead to validate His sacrifice and deity, thus enabling us to live in newness of life by the promised Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:4). Now that's a blessing! All these blessings that come from the one promise made to Abraham more than 4000 years ago!