

31: The God of the Hebrews - a re-introduction to Genesis (2007)

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Date: 26 February 2012

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[0 : 00] And we're going to read twice this morning. We're first of all reading in Genesis. If you'd like to turn with me to Genesis chapter 17. I don't have the page number, but Genesis is the very beginning of the Bible.

We're going to read some verses there, and then we'll sing again, and then we'll read again from the letter to the Hebrews. We're going back this morning to some studies that we left off actually a couple of years ago now, perhaps even longer ago than that in Genesis.

And I want us this morning just to reorientate ourselves a little bit before we dive back in to our series beginning at chapter 24. So here we are in Genesis chapter 17.

When Abraham was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him, I am God Almighty.

Walk before me and be blameless that I may make or that I may confirm my covenant between me and you and may multiply you greatly.

[1 : 10] Then Abraham fell on his face and God said to him, Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

No longer shall your name be called Abraham, but your name shall be Abraham. For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.

And God said to Abraham, As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is the covenant which you shall keep between me and you for your offspring after you.

[2 : 17] Every male among you shall be circumcised. Look down to verse 22. When God had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house. And he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him.

Amen. May God bless to us this his word. Well, take out your Bibles again, and this time we're going to read some verses in the New Testament in the letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews comes near the end of the New Testament after Timothy and Titus and Philemon before James. And we're going to read in Hebrews chapter 3 and just a couple of verses in chapter 4.

Book of Hebrews speaking to the true Hebrews, the New Testament Hebrews, the people of God, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Speaking often of the experience of the Old Testament Hebrews and applying it to us, to those living in the New Testament age.

[3 : 35] And expounding what it means to be part of that great unfolding story that goes back right to the book of Genesis. So here at the beginning of chapter 3, the writer reminds us of the same heavenly calling that we share with all God's people from the beginning.

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses. As much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later.

But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

[4 : 45] Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. And he quotes there in Psalm 95 about the time of the people under Moses.

So verse 12, So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

By the way, notice there how the writer makes it so clear what unbelief is. Do you see? Verse 18, disobedience. Verse 19, unbelief. Just the same thing.

So look at chapter 4, verse 9. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Let us, therefore, strive to enter that rest so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.

[6 : 44] And no creature is hidden from his sight. But all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.

Jesus, the Son of God. Let us hold fast to our confession. And we'll stop there. May God bless to us this his word.

I want to speak this morning really about the God of the Hebrews. Living the Christian life is hard. That's because we're on a journey.

We've been called by God to become his people. But our full salvation is not yet. Apostle Peter is especially stark about that when he says in 1 Peter 1 that although we have been born again into a living hope of an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us.

Nevertheless, he says, we are still being guided by God's power through faith. For a salvation that is only ready to be revealed at the last time, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 04] And Peter tells us, therefore, in our present experience, there will be many grievous trials. Believers face struggles. Struggles without. Struggles within.

Hardship. Persecutions. Battles with sin. And we simply share all the common experiences of human beings in a world which is under the curse, which is a world of sin and of death.

And so naturally, of course, we're tempted to give up. We're tempted to give up that journey and go back to a life that we had before that journey of faith began. A life which somehow now seems, in our mind at least, nostalgically, to have been a much easier life, a much better life, a life of peace and satisfaction without struggle.

But you see, the New Testament is so very realistic. And much of the New Testament is written to encourage us not to do that. Encourage us to resist our desires to go back.

The book of Hebrews in particular, for example, is all about that. It reminds New Testament Hebrews, Christian people, it reminds them of the greatness of our salvation. And urges us not to neglect it, not to go back.

[9 : 21] We share in Christ, he says, if we hold our confidence to the end. Now, all through the letter, the writer of the Hebrews tells us how much better is the privilege that we have as New Testament Hebrews compared to the Old Testament ones.

We have better promises. We have a better covenant. We have a better hope. We have a better sacrifice. All these things we have, and yet, we too are not yet home.

We don't yet possess the ultimate rest that God promised his people right from the beginning. Now, as we read, there remains still a rest for the people of God.

And let us, therefore, strive to enter that rest, says the writer, so that we don't fall away by the same kind of disobedience and unbelief that caused many people in Moses' time to fail to enter the land of Canaan.

Now, Hebrews reminds us, you see, that we are part of a very, very old story. The story of God's people that goes right back to the book of Genesis.

[10 : 25] Our story is so closely intertwined with theirs that Hebrews 11 verse 40 tells us that God, having promised something better for us, that apart from us, they, the Old Testament people of God, would not be made perfect.

That is, he's saying that the race they were running and the race we are running is the same race, with the same faith, and aimed at the same great goal.

And that's a great encouragement for our journey of faith when we see that and we can learn from their journey of faith that has gone before us. And that's why the whole of Hebrews 11 tells us to look back at those so-called heroes of the faith and says, So also let us run with endurance the race marked out for us.

But not, notice, saying looking to them, being inspired by their faith. No, let us run the race marked out for us looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith.

Hebrews 11, you see, isn't so much about finding an example in the faith of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the others. Although that is part of it, we mustn't ignore that part of it. But much more importantly, it's about finding encouragement in the God of our forefathers in the faith, who is himself the founder and the perfecter of our faith.

[11 : 53] And who, of course, to us has been made known fully and finally in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you see, that is what the book of Genesis is really all about.

It was written, of course, first of all, for Old Testament Hebrews, traveling with Moses on a long journey to Canaan, the promised land. And he wrote to encourage them to keep on to the promised land, to keep faith, to keep trust in God, not to give up, not to go back.

That's why it was written. But, of course, Paul reminds us that all these things were written also for us, upon whom the end of the ages has come, the New Testament era. They are written, he says, to the Romans that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

And that that hope will sustain us until the great day of the revelation of the Lord Jesus, when our full salvation is at last ours. Now, that's why we're going back to our studies in this book of Genesis.

A couple of years ago, as I said, we got up to chapter 23, and we've had a break. So, before we plunge back in at chapter 24, where we will next week, I want to have a little resume, if you like, of the big picture, so that we're clear what it is we're talking about in this ancient book.

[13 : 11] Moses is writing to encourage his people to keep on the road with him in confident faith, despite all the grievous trials in their life.

So, the question is, how does he do that? What does he do? Well, what he does is, in this book, he reminds his people who they really are, and where they've really come from as human beings and as the specially called people of God, and where they're really going.

In other words, he gives them a very real and coherent view of the world. He explains the whole world, and he explains their part in the world. And above all, in doing that, he tells us all about who is their God.

Who is this God, and what is this God of the traveling faithful, whether Old Testament Hebrews or New Testament Hebrews? Whether this journey is the journey of our spiritual forefathers under Moses, or our journey today in the 21st century as their spiritual heirs.

Who is the God of the Hebrews? Well, the answer to all of these great questions begin in the book of Beginnings, the book of Genesis. I'm on this morning just to summarize three themes that I think come out very clearly in this wonderful book, and that's the first.

[14 : 35] The first is this, rather, that the God of the Hebrews, the God of Genesis, is the God of creation. Look at the very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1, verse 1.

Because this tells us that this God is no tribal God, he's no national God. He's not just part of some pantheon as one of many gods. No, our God, the God of Genesis, is the cosmic creator of all things.

And therefore, he and he alone explains the whole universe. He explains its purpose. He explains its destiny. And that is the overwhelming message of the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis, something that we sometimes call a prehistory.

However you interpret these chapters, we have no time at all this morning to go into any of that detail, but however you read these chapters, one thing is abundantly clear. And that is that it is God alone who is the originator of absolutely everything.

In the beginning, verse 1, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, Genesis 1 speaks with a majestic solemnity to answer the great questions that the human heart has asked from the very beginning.

[15 : 53] The great question of all is why? Why is there anything at all? Why is the world as it is? Why is my life significant at all in this vast world of billions of people?

Well, the answer to all of these questions is this, because God created it. And God said, and it was. And God said, and it was. And God said, and it was.

He and he alone created the whole world, says Genesis 1. And he created an ordered world. The sea and the dry land, the earth and the sky, the animals each in their place.

And he created a good world. Behold, everything was very good. And as the climax of Genesis 1 shows us, with the creation of man in God's image, and in the whole focus of chapter 2 that takes up that as central in God's creative purpose, we see both the glory and the goal of that creation.

And that is that God and man are dwelling together, enjoying the glory of creation, and knowing one another and relating to one another in a beautiful relationship. God rejoicing in all that he has made.

[17 : 10] And man showing forth the glory of God as his image in the world over all creation. But of course, though we recognize much in that picture of that creation glory, we know there's another side to it as well, don't we?

We know that we live in a world of beauty and wonderful complexity and creativity and diversity and order, all of these things. But we also know that we live in a dark world of war and famine, of sickness and death, of hatred and murder, of disharmony and darkness.

And of course, that's what the following chapters of Genesis also explain. The world is under a curse. We know it deep in our hearts. We experience it. But the reason for that, that Genesis gives, is very, very clear.

It is also God's powerful doing that the world should be like that. It's his response to man's sin, to man's will for rebellion against God's gracious rule.

And so, astonishing as it is to us, human beings simply wouldn't accept the glorious perfection of God's world.

[18 : 21] Wouldn't accept even their privileged place in it. No, human beings want to be in control. And so, they want to play God. And so, they disobey and refuse his command.

And they go their own way. And of course, the rest, quite literally, is history, isn't it? Read Genesis 4 about the progressive establishment of rebellious, self-assertive humanity with all its murder and strife.

Did it bring peace and harmony? John Lennon sang, didn't he? Imagine there's no heaven, no God above us, only sky.

Imagine all the people living life in peace. Well, it was imaginary, wasn't it? Completely imaginary. Read Genesis 4. That's the reality.

And Genesis 5, the relentless toll of death on every single generation. The wages of sin. And he died, and he died, and he died, and he died.

[19 : 24] And one day they'll say that about you. And he died. And she died. Every one of us. And then Genesis 6 tells us about a society where men's hearts were only evil all of the time.

So dreadful that God must judge a whole generation in a terrible tsunami and flood. And yet, amid all this tragedy, there remains glimmers of a God who cares for his world, who's committed to the creatures he's made, and above all, his own very image in man.

Despite the rise of Cain's murderous line, another son is born to Eve, Seth, and a son to him. And people began to call on the name of the Lord.

And despite the horror of the judgment of the flood, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And his descendants are saved and blessed by God.

And despite the resurgence of evil on a massive scale in Babel, which is just a large-scale repetition of Genesis chapter 3, still there is hope.

[20 : 40] And the promise that God gave originally in Genesis 3.15, despite the sin of man, there would come from the woman, from human flesh itself, a seed that would crush the serpent and his work.

That promise is alive still. It's not extinguished, even despite the wickedness of all that mankind can throw against God and against one another.

Now, we'll come back to that promise in just a moment, but just think for a minute. Think what it means to know that our God is the creator of all things.

For a start, it means, doesn't it, that this world is not simply defined by chance. That was the prevailing view in the time of Moses, in the world of the Egyptian and the Babylonian creation myths.

The world was just chance. It was a chance fallout from warring factions of the gods and sexual unions among the gods. And therefore, human beings were just a chance byproduct.

[21 : 41] They were just lackeys, playthings of the gods, there to serve the gods at their whim. Well, not surprisingly then, if that's your view of the world, then human life is going to be very cheap.

It was there to be exploited by the powerful. It was expendable at its beginning and at its end. If it got in the way, it was perfectly right to just get rid of it. Genocide was perfectly reasonable to any powerful ruler, if a particular people got in your way.

They're not so very different from many contemporary worldviews. Isn't that right? If life is just chance, if it's just here because of an accidental collocation of atoms, if it's all just a meaningless march of matter and DNA, well, you'll have a very cheapened view of life, won't you?

You'll have a society where abortion is rife, where infanticide and euthanasia are increasingly being pushed for, where the papers will be full as they were just yesterday of the scandal of sex selection and abortion of unwanted children just because it's a baby girl, where the right to life is decided by all sorts of other things than the intrinsic value of a created human life.

But no, because God created all the world and all life, it all has meaning and it all has value. Every human being made in God's image is precious in his sight.

[23 : 12] That means your life has meaning and purpose. It means your life is valuable, not just to you, not just to people who love you, but to God who made you. In our world today, there's so much despair, there's so much disillusion, there's so much lack of hope.

No wonder, no wonder if everything is just by accident. But we're not. And therefore there is meaning and purpose.

And above all, there is hope. Because the world is not defined by mere chance. Nor is the world defined merely by sex.

Again, in Moses' day, there was a world obsessed by sex. And that was greatly in part due to the fact their whole view of creation was taken up with sex. The fallout from sexual unions among the gods and so on.

That's why their religions were full of fertility rites and temple prostitutes and so on. And yet by total contrast with that, Genesis teaches us that the world is not procreated through some grotesque sex act among gods in the heavens.

[24 : 24] The world is created out of nothing by God. And sex is simply a gift that God gives to human beings to be used rightfully and yes, joyfully, but not idolatrously.

In other words, sex is not divine. Sex is not something to be worshipped. It's not something to be made spiritual as the pagan idolatry made it.

Sex is not our master. Well, still today, sex is spiritualized and idolized. Sex is worshipped everywhere in our culture and many others.

All the time. People seek their destiny through sex and sexual expression. What a tragedy and sadness and darkness that brings to a society.

Isn't that so? A world of prostitution, child trafficking, pedophilia. A world whose biggest industry is pornography.

[25 : 23] Whether it's Egypt or Babylon or 21st century Britain. That's what happens when people's whole view of the world is defined by sex.

But the world is not defined by sex. Sex is not the elixir of life. Sex is not the key to meaning and fulfillment in life. That can be found only in God, our creator, who made us for him.

We're defined by our relationship with him. Not by our relationship with our gonads. It also means the world is not defined by mere luck.

Genesis teaches us that our misfortunes, our miseries in life are not just bad luck. They're not curses or bad magic that have to be met with charms and spells and mantras and offerings to the spirits or pleasing the ancestors.

No. The problems in this world and in our lives are due to sin. And due to rebellion against God and his order. The moral order of a just God.

[26 : 32] But so many people today still are so much in bondage to superstitions of one kind or another. Think of the animism, for example, of many Asian cultures.

Some of you know about that. Where fear of bad luck is such a terrible thing. Everything has to be done on an auspicious date. Where fear of offending the ancestors is such a terrible thing.

Or many African cultures where there's desperate fear of curses and spells and witch doctors and black magic and mootie. Even in our secular culture here in the West.

So many people are in thrall to horoscopes, to crazy charms, to all kinds of mumbo-jumbo. If your future well-being has nothing to do whatsoever with your behavior, but everything to do just with luck.

But no, it's not luck and bad luck that's the problem. It's sin that is humanity's problem. Therefore, the way of true religion is not a hint of mystery and mumbo-jumbo.

[27 : 36] We don't need priests and potion makers to charge us the earth to help us get good luck. The true way is clear. It's unequivocal.

God has revealed it. It's obedience to God the Creator and His command and His rule over His world. Now, we could say much, much more about all of this.

And I refer you back to our studies in these early chapters of Genesis. But do you see that Genesis confronts head-on every other view of the world that there is, whether it's ancient or it's modern?

Not just modern atheistic determinism, the sort of thing that Richard Dawkins wants us all to believe, but every other false religion, every other superstition that you'll find in today's world.

Genesis stands up to all of that and says, no. Into the darkness and the hopelessness of every version of that modern-day paganism, whether it's religious or irreligious, Genesis says, let there be light.

[28 : 37] God points us to the one God, the God of creation, and calls us all to bow down before Him. And for the believer, whether you're a believer following Moses in the wilderness or following Christ today, isn't that a huge comfort?

That God the Creator is our God. That our help, as the psalmist says, is in the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. When the world seems so terrifying, so huge, so fearful, so full of foreboding, doesn't it feel like that to you at times?

Remember, He made it all. The God who hears your prayers. And He made you. And you matter to Him. You're precious in His sight.

What a wonderful comfort. Of course, it's a challenge too, isn't it? Because this God will brook no rivals at all. Not in your heart, not in my heart, nor anybody's heart.

Woe to Him who strives with Him who formed Him, says Isaiah. This God is the God of creation. He's the Maker of heaven and earth.

[29 : 50] And we must never forget it. But second, Genesis teaches us that this God is also the God of the covenant. Turn to Genesis 12, because it's from here on that this theme really dominates the book of Genesis.

It's the God of covenant who defines His chosen people and their destiny. After these terrible chapters that tell of sin and alienation of man from God, then in chapter 12 we have the beginning, don't we, of the final solution in the call of Abraham.

Immediately after the story of Babel in verse 10 of Genesis 11, we resume that genealogy of promise, of the promised seed, all the way from Shem, Noah's son, down to Abraham.

And in the first four verses of chapter 12, we have the fulcrum, the hinge point of the whole of the book of Genesis. The covenant promise that God gives to this man.

A pagan man, by the way, living in Ur of the Chaldees, no doubt worshipping the moon god like everybody else in that city. But God calls out to him in His sovereign grace.

[31 : 00] And He gives a marvelous, world-changing, history-changing promise. Now the quad promise is what Ralph Davis calls it. He promises him four things.

He promises him a place, the land that God's going to lead him to, a people or progeny, a great nation who will come from His seed. He promises His presence and His protection, blessing Abraham and all who bless him and cursing those who curse him.

Above all, He promises a plan, a program of redemption that through this man and his seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

It's an astonishing turn, and yet the whole of the history of mankind and creation narrows down right at this point to pass into this one family through whom God will bless the whole of the world.

It's another of those hourglass moments that Bob was speaking about last week in 2 Samuel 7. From this one man through a great nation would come at last, the true man, the promised seed, in whom all nations would be blessed as he at last destroys the serpent and the curse and restores the glory of God's kingdom.

[32 : 17] And everything that follows in Genesis 12 to 50 is the story of the beginning of God's amazing commitment to that covenant promise. We have three cycles of stories that take us from Abraham, one man, to a whole family, the patriarchs, and then to a whole nation, the nation of Israel.

So what does it mean for a motley crew traveling with God as Hebrews, either in Moses' day or in our own day? What does it mean that our God is the God of the covenant?

It means that our God is tenaciously and relentlessly committed to doing what he has promised, even with people who deserve a whole lot less, even with people who don't deserve any of it at all.

That's one of the great, great encouragements of these stories about the patriarchs in Genesis. If God can stick with some of the characters that we read about in these chapters, despite everything that they are, everything that they've done, everything they don't do, then won't God's wonderful grace be sufficient even for people like us?

Bob quoted last week those wonderful words of C.S. Lewis, didn't he? When God's people mean well, he always takes them to have meant much better than they ever could have known.

[33 : 43] Isn't Romans 4 verse 20 an example of that? God's verdict on Abraham, don't turn it up, just listen. God says of Abraham, no distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in faith as he gave glory to God.

The Abraham who nearly lost his wife Sarah, not once, but twice, through ridiculous deceitful folly. The Abraham who argued with God and tried to make his servant, his heir instead of a son.

The God, the Abraham who went off and took a concubine to produce a seed because God's promise hadn't been fulfilled quickly enough. That Abraham? Yes, that Abraham.

Because God had his heart. And despite all his stumblings, he was enabled to be loyal to his God right to the very end. He grew strong in faith as he gave glory to God.

And so also with Isaac and Jacob, and we'll see as we study them, men who were but shadows of their father Abraham. But they were held, despite everything, by the covenant God of grace.

[34 : 58] And that's what Moses wants to teach his people, and wants to teach us what we're to hold on to. That we're people of this God, the God of the covenant. And that's what it means to be covenant people.

There's more, of course, being covenant people. You remember perhaps that when we looked at Abraham's story, we saw that the very heart of it were these chapters 15 to 17 where God confirms his covenant with Abraham.

And we read some of it. Having led him out of Canaan, out of Ur into Canaan, and having rescued him when he went back to Egypt, God comes to him and confirms his covenant with him.

He meets him in that ceremony of darkness and fire, just as he met his people later under Moses in fire and darkness at Sinai. And also, just as there, he showed to Abraham that his grace, although it's marvelous, is not cheap grace.

It's not grace to be trifled with. Chapter 15 gave the great promise to Abraham, to you and to your seed, I give this land. But after Abraham's disobedience and unbelief in chapter 16 in turning to Hagar, God reiterates what it means to be in covenant with him.

[36 : 15] We read it in chapter 17, I am God Almighty. You must walk before me and be blameless that I may confirm my covenant with you. And that's what real faith means, you see.

It's the obedient faith of those who truly do bow the knee to our covenant Lord. That's exactly what God said through Moses at Sinai to the people, wasn't it? I am the God of the covenant who has led you out of Egypt, but you will obey me.

You will keep my commands because I am your God. It's not new, Moses is saying, when he writes Genesis. He's saying this has always been what it means to be the covenant God.

And the people of the covenant God, the people of the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Nor has anything changed, by the way, for the New Testament Hebrews. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, says Jesus, he it is who loves me.

That's why in his great commission, he said, go into all the world and make disciples, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. Indeed, that's a second thing that we learn in these chapters, what it means to be a covenant people, people of faith.

[37 : 28] What it means to share the privileges of God's covenant. God's plan was that through Abraham and his seed, there would be a blessing that would come to the whole world. Now, ultimately, of course, that comes through the seed, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But all true seed of Abraham are to be a blessing to the world. That's why it's highly significant. You remember, we saw immediately after God's covenant renewal with Abraham in chapter 17, immediately after, God's people are marked out as special by this mark of circumcision.

Immediately, that overflows into blessing of the pagan people all around. The very next chapter, we have Abraham pleading with God in prayer for the salvation of men in Sodom.

We have through that the rescue of Lot out of the judgment that came on that city. Well, how important it is for Moses' people and for us today to remember what it means to be people of the covenant God.

People who are humbled by God's sheer grace despite all their sins and all their folly that God keeps. Yes. But also, therefore, are people who do bow their knee to God, who take his commands seriously, who walk before him blamelessly, truly and rightly, people who are his.

[38 : 47] And how important also not to forget the purpose of that calling. Indeed, the sheer privilege of it to proclaim to the world around the excellences of him who has called us out of darkness and into light.

The light of the God of all creation. See, the more we read of what it means to be people of the covenant God, people who, who therefore, do live in this grip of God's relentless grace.

The grace that lifted and carried Abraham and Isaac and Jacob despite everything. The more we understand what it means to be that people, the more, of course, like Abraham, we will be growing in our faith and giving glory to God.

Our God is the God of creation who explains the whole world. He's the God of the covenant who defines his people and their destiny. But lastly, the God of Genesis we must never forget is the God of the Christ.

He's the God whose purposes in both creation and his covenant would come to its climax and did come to its climax in the seed, the seed of the woman come at last to destroy the serpent and all his works.

[40 : 04] There's a second book of Genesis you know in the Bible. Matthew's Gospel begins with these words, the book of the Genesis, the beginning of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

See, there's a real sense in which the whole of the rest of the book of Genesis and the whole of the rest of the Bible is simply the unfolding of the story of Genesis 3.15, the promise of the seed of the woman who would at last bruise the head of the serpent.

And all the way through these many unfolding stories that we've seen and that we will see in Genesis in the chapters to come, in the midst of the extraordinary patience of the covenant God towards his people which is so evident and so wonderfully encouraging to us, we must never lose sight of something even bigger, of the golden thread that is quietly and carefully unfolding all the way through it all with relentless persistence.

that is the story of the seed from generation to generation according to promise despite all apparent opposition and every evidence to the contrary.

So many stages you see the expectation of that coming right back at the beginning. Will this one be the one when Seth is born or when Noah is born or when Isaac is born even Jacob, will this at last be the one?

[41 : 32] But no, crucial though each birth is, still there's always more to unfold. There's a future fulfillment far greater that's still to come.

Even for Moses' people as they were on the brink of the promised land, still there was a future that they longed for. Maybe by then, more specifically, longing for a scion of the tribe of Judah through what Moses speaks in his oracle before his death.

But still, they knew they saw only dimly. Of course, for us, we know brightly and clearly that seed has come. We know what the prophets longed to know. We know the exact time and the place and the person in whom that promise was fulfilled, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

In him, all the promises to Abraham have been fulfilled and are being fulfilled all through the world today. because this book of beginnings has reached its climax in the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Moses wrote about me, said Jesus in John chapter 5. On resurrection day, remember the road to Emmaus with those blinded disciples. He began with Moses.

[42 : 48] No doubt he began with Genesis and the story of Abraham. He began with Moses and unfolded from all the scriptures the things concerning himself, the Lord Jesus. These scriptures in Genesis, these are they that speak of the Christ.

So we shouldn't be at all surprised, should we, when we read in Genesis to see many glimmerings and shadows, many provocative patterns, even way back then in these ancient stories of things that would at last be fully unveiled and fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

The angelic annunciations of special births, births, the birth itself of Isaac that brought such great delight and yet at the same time great division. The haunting echoes in some of the stories, perhaps above all in Abraham's great test on Mount Moriah where God tells him, take your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him up as a sacrifice on the mountain.

These are the scriptures that speak of me, says Jesus. And nor should we be surprised one last thing that I must mention as we close.

The consistency that we find both in the Old Testament and the New Testament about the uniqueness of God's one and only way of salvation for all of his people, whoever they are.

[44 : 15] Just because God's covenant promises do find all their fulfillment in one seed alone, in one man, Jesus Christ and him alone. Then that means that there has only ever been one way to share in the blessings promised to come through Abraham to the world.

Since the very beginning, the blessing of Abraham comes to all the families of the earth only as they align themselves with Abraham's true seed. And that's still true today.

Apostle Paul is very clear in Romans 9. Not all children of Abraham are his true offspring, but through Isaac shall your offspring be called. So it's not the children of the flesh, those naturally born, he says, who are the children of God, but the children of promise who are counted as offspring.

Not through natural birth, but through heavenly birth, being born of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. See, Abraham's true family is the true family of Christian faith.

You see what that means. It's so important for us to see what that means, especially today when people talk blithely sometimes of what they call the Abrahamic religions. You hear that, don't you? What they mean is Judaism and Christianity and Islam.

[45 : 38] The implication is, well, they're all really the same. They all stem from Abraham. But the truth is, there is only one true Abrahamic faith. Only one.

You see, Genesis tells us you don't share the blessings of Abraham through Ishmael. It's the claim of Islam, isn't it? No, only through Isaac and his seed.

Genesis tells us neither can you share the blessings of Abraham, though, by merely being a natural descendant even of Isaac. That's the Jews' claim, of course, isn't it?

But no, Esau, his son, was rejected because he despised his birthright and he forfeited his blessing. He would not seek that blessing in the only place it could be found, through humbling himself to his brother, Jacob, the chosen seed.

Now, just as God blessed those who way back in the days of Genesis blessed Abraham and his seed Isaac and his seed Israel, he blessed those who saw clearly and responded to God's one and only revealed way of true and ultimate blessing for the world, well, so today it's exactly the same.

[46 : 57] If, says Paul, and only if, if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring and an heir according to the promise, Galatians 3.

Be the God of creation who made all things, the God of the covenant who promised salvation, is the God who has revealed himself now fully and finally to all creation in the coming of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in nobody else, none other. And it is therefore God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who stands before every one of us today and says to us, exactly as he said to Abraham, I am God Almighty.

Walk before me and be blameless that I may establish my covenant between you and me. Take my yoke upon you, said Jesus.

And you will find rest for your souls. So you see, friends, whoever you are or wherever you're from, there's only one way to the blessing of God Almighty.

[48 : 13] Only one way to the blessing that this God promised through the seed of this man, Abraham, all those years ago. Only one way. But it is the way and it is the sure way, the glorious way to blessing beyond measure through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And that's the way that's open to all who will name the name of Jesus Christ and bow the knee to him today. Let's pray. The Lord said to Abraham, In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring. Thank you, Lord, for your grace in creation that brings us the blessings of life itself.

Thank you for your persistent grace in covenant plan and purpose, guarding and keeping your people for glory. Thank you above all for your grace made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And so may we be found worthy of him on that great day of his coming. we pray. For we ask it. For his glory's sake. Amen.