

# Reintroduction to Genesis - The God of All Hebrews

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn now to our reading for this morning, and Willie is picking up his series in Genesis. So, some months back we were in Genesis and we're returning. And if you don't have a Bible with you, we've got Vista Bibles at the side, at the back.

Please do grab a Bible if you don't have one with you. And turn with me to Genesis chapter 17. Genesis chapter 17.

That's page 11 and 12, if you have a Vista Bible. And in a moment we'll be flipping forward to Hebrews, but I'll tell you about that in a minute.

But first we read Genesis 17, beginning verse 1 there. Genesis 17 and verse 1. When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram.

And said to him, I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.

[ 1 : 10 ] Then Abram 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 Abram, 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, or 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.

[ 2 : 18 ] This is my covenant, which you shall keep between me and you, and your offspring after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised.

You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. And just look down to verse 22.

When he 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. Well, if you turn now to the book of Hebrews in the New Testament.

If you're in the Vista Bibles, that's page 1008. Hebrews chapter 11. And we'll be picking it up there from verse 17.

[ 3 : 27 ] Hebrews 11. And verse 17. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. And he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. By faith, Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith, Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith, Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

And look down now to verse 39. Amen. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us,

they should not be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[ 5 : 15 ] Amen. May God bless to us his word this morning. Well, do take your Bibles, if you would, and turn to the very first chapter of the Bible, Genesis chapter 1.

I want today to talk about the God of all the Hebrews, by way of an introduction, a reintroduction, I might say, to the book of Genesis. The New Testament letter to the Hebrews, that we read something from earlier, is full of encouragement for battling believers, those who are faced with many pressures to give up, to turn back, to go back to an easier life without the struggles that real Christian faith, if it is real, will inevitably always face.

But the writer says, no, don't go back. And the apostle proclaims, we will share in Christ if we hold our original confidence to the end. To the end.

And he encourages us, saying, we are not those who shrink back and are destroyed, but are those who have faith and preserve their souls. And Hebrews reminds us that, as Christians, we are part of a very long story, going all the way back to the book of Genesis.

And in fact, so entwined is our story with their ancient story, that he says, as we read at the end of Hebrews 11, that God has promised something better for us, that apart from us, they should not yet be made perfect, made complete.

[ 6 : 55 ] That is, the race that we are running as believers today is the same race that they were running, the same journey of faith, aimed at the same ultimate goal, ultimate salvation.

And that's why Hebrews 11, of course, so famously lays out such a long list of those ancient people of faith, and exhorts us, likewise, to run our race with endurance, to trust in the same wonderful God that they trusted in.

But knowing, in our day, even more of the privileges than they had, because we are looking to Jesus, not just the founder of faith, but the very perfecter and finisher of faith.

We have the very great encouragement, don't we, of looking to the same wonderful God of the Hebrews still, but now, in these last days, made known to us so much more fully, completely, in the Son, in the air of all things, through whom he also created the world, as Hebrews 1 begins.

And that's why the book of Genesis is so important for us today. It was written first to those ancient Hebrew pilgrims who were traveling with Moses to the land of promise, and it was written to encourage them to keep on trusting God, not giving up, not going back.

[ 8 : 20 ] But the Apostle Paul says, doesn't he, that all of these things that were written in these former days were written for us, who live in these last days. So that, he says, through encouragement and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

We might have hope. The hope that will sustain us until the day of our full salvation, until the day that the Lord Jesus returns.

That's why, nearly two years ago now, it was in summer of 2022, we began studying Genesis, and it's why we're going to go back now and pick up, God willing, where we left off after the story of Abraham.

And we'll do that next week in Genesis chapter 24, the beginning of the story of Isaac and Jacob. But this week, since it's some time that we're in Genesis, and I'm sure quite a number have joined us since then, I thought it would help for us all, perhaps, to have a recap, a little resume, as it were, to remind us of the big picture of this book, so that we can be clear from the beginning what it's really all about.

Moses is writing to God's people to encourage them to keep on the road with him in confident faith, despite all the many grievous trials of life.

[ 9 : 39 ] So how does he do that? Well, in this book, he reminds them who God's people really are, where they've come from, as human beings, but also as the chosen people of God, and also, of course, ultimately where they are going.

In other words, he gives the people he is writing to a coherent worldview. He explains the whole world, and he explains their part in that world.

And above all, in doing all of that, of course, he is telling them very clearly all about the one who is their God. Who and what is the God of the traveling faithful, whether it's the journey of our spiritual

forefathers long ago under Moses, or indeed, our journey in the 21st century.

Today, we are their spiritual heirs as Christian believers. So it's a big question, isn't it? Who really is our God? Well, the answers to all of these great questions of life, all of them begin in this book of beginnings, in the book of Genesis.

And I want to try and just summarize today three key themes that come out so very clearly in this wonderful book. Three crucial things for us to keep in mind as we read it.

[ 11 : 02 ] So first of all, then, beginning right at the very beginning. Genesis 1, verse 1. Our God is the God of creation. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Moses is teaching his people that their God is no tribal God. He's no national God. Nor is he part of some great pantheon of gods among many others. No, our God, the God of Genesis, is the cosmic creator of all things.

And therefore, he and he alone explains this whole universe, this whole purpose, this whole destiny. And that is really the overarching message of the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

Sometimes it's called the prehistory. But however you interpret these chapters, one thing is absolutely clear. And that it is God alone who is the originator of all things.

In the beginning, God created all the heavens and all the earth. Genesis chapter 1 speaks with a majestic solemnity to answer all the great questions of human beings through the ages.

[ 12 : 21 ] The great why question. Why is there anything at all instead of nothing? Why is the world as it is as we see it? Why is my life and your life of any significance at all if it is?

And the answer to all of these questions and many more is because God created it. That's a repeating refrain all the way through chapter 1, isn't it? And God said and it was.

And God said and it was. And so on. He and he alone created the whole world. And as we see in these chapters he created an ordered world.

Sea and land. Earth and sky. Every creature in their place. And so on. He created the whole world. He created an ordered world. And he created a very good world.

And as the climax of Genesis chapter 1 shows us with the creation of mankind in God's image and the whole focus of course of Genesis chapter 2 is taken up with that central aspect of God's creative purpose.

[ 13 : 29 ] The creation of man. We see both the glory of creation and the goal of creation there.

And that is that God and man his image should dwell together enjoying the glory of creation.

Knowing one another. Relating to one another. In a beautiful relationship of perfection. God rejoicing in everything that he's made and man showing forth the glory of the Lord as his chief image on the earth.

Of course although we recognize a great deal in that picture of creation glory the truth is that we are on another side to that don't we? Because we do inhabit a world of beauty a world of creativity a world of wonderful diversity a world of wonder in so many different ways but also we inherit a world of darkness a world of sickness a world of death a world of hatred and of horror of disharmony and a very great darkness.

And that is what the following chapters of Genesis express also that this world is under a curse. that's what we experience it to be.

But the reason you see that Genesis gives for that is very clear. That is also the doing of God very purposefully. And he does it in response to mankind's sin to mankind's rebellion against everything that God has made and against his gracious rule.

[ 15 : 14 ] See astonishing as it is human beings wouldn't accept the glorious perfection of God's world. Wouldn't accept their privileged place in it as God wanted it to be.

No. Human beings wanted instead to be in control themselves. They wanted to play God. And so were disloyal and defiant of his command.

Went their own way. And the rest well quite literally is history. our history. You read on from Genesis chapter 4 about the progressive establishment of that rebelliousness in human society. But read those chapters. Did it bring peace? Did it bring harmony? Did it bring beauty? Imagine there's no heaven. No God above us only sky.

Well that's what John Lennon sang. Imagine all the people he said living life in peace. Well yes that was just pure imagination wasn't it?

[ 16 : 19 ] Imaginary. Read Genesis 4. Read Genesis 5. It tells us doesn't it of the relentlessness of death coming to every single generation.

The wages the bitter wage that sin and rebellion against God pays. Genesis chapter 6 tells of a society where we're told man's heart was only evil all of the time.

And so dreadful was it that God had to bring a catastrophic judgment on a whole generation in a terrible tsunami and flood. And yet amid all that tragedy as you read these chapters there remain glimmerings of a God who cares for his world.

Who's committed to the creatures that he's made. And above all who has committed to his own image in mankind. And despite the rise of Cain's murderous line you read at the end of Genesis 4 that another son is born to Eve Seth and he had a son.

And the end of that chapter tells us people began to call on the name of the Lord. And despite even the horror the judgment of the flood we read that Noah found grace in the eyes of God.

[ 17 : 42 ] And his descendants are saved and are blessed. And then despite the massive resurgence of evil again among mankind marked out by the story of Babel which is just a replay on a huge scale of the rebellion in Eden but again still there is hope.

Because that first promise that God gave in Genesis 3 15 that despite man's sin there would come from the woman from human flesh the seed of promise that would crush the serpent.

That promise is alive and it's not been extinguished even by all that manifold wickedness of mankind throwing out God and throwing wickedness at one another.

Now we'll come back to that promise in a moment but just think for a moment what it means to know that the God that we read of in the Bible is really the creator of absolutely everything.

Because first of all it means doesn't it that this world is not defined and explained by mere chance.

That was the prevailing world view in the days of Moses and the Egyptians and the Babylonian myths and so on that our world was just chance.

[ 18 : 53 ] It was the fallout from battles among the gods, the many gods in the skies and that human beings therefore were just accidental. They were therefore lackeys to serve the gods at their own whims.

So we shouldn't be surprised that when you read of that society you find that human life was very cheap. Just there to be exploited by powerful rulers for their own gain.

Human life was considered expendable at its beginning and at its end and at any other time if it got in the way. Genocide? Perfectly reasonable if it served a powerful ruler's purpose.

And that's not so different is it to many prevailing world views around us today. Life is just by chance accidental banging together of atoms in a primeval universe.

That all of us are just part of the meaningless march of DNA replicating the selfish gene and all of that. And that's why we also in our society today have a very cheapened view of life.

[ 20 : 02 ] Abortion is rampant isn't it in our world. Euthanasia is being pushed more and more through our legislatures. Even infanticide and far worse are being pushed by avant-garde philosophers of the day.

The right to life is decided by all sorts of other things than the fact that life itself has meaning and purpose and value of its own to its creator.

But no, you see, because that is not so, because God created all life, the whole world, his whole world does have meaning, all of it. And it has value, especially human beings who are made in his image.

Your life has meaning and has purpose. Your life has great value, not just to you, not just to others, but to God who created you. See, in our world today, there's so much despair, isn't there?

So much disillusion, such a lack of hope. Well, no wonder if we're all just an accident. But you see, we're not.

[ 21 : 11 ] And therefore, there is meaning and purpose. And above all, there is hope to our human existence. Our world is not defined by mere chance, nor is our world defined merely by sex.

Again, in Moses' day, that was a culture obsessed with sex because it was all tied up with the view of creation being bound up with sex, sexual unions between the gods and so on.

And that's why ancient religions were so taken up, with fertility rites, with temple prostitutes and so on. And by total contrast, you see, Genesis tells us the world, no, it was not procreated through grotesque sexual unions and bestial unions in the sky.

Sex is not the beginning of everything. It's a gift of God, yes, to be used rightly, to be used joyfully by human beings, but not to be worshipped, not to be an idol. Sex is not divine, in other words.

It's not to be worshipped. It's not a spiritual thing, as ancient pagan idolatry made it out to be. It's not our master to rule us, to define us, to give us our identity.

[ 22 : 23 ] So many people think today. In our society today, sex is idolized, isn't it? It's worshipped in our culture all the time. People seek their destiny through their sexual identity, through their sexual expression and so on.

But what a tragedy, what a sadness, what a darkness that brings, what a poverty to human life and existence. We live in a world of prostitution, don't we?

Sex trafficking, child prostitution, the porn industry. We're no different in that regard to ancient Babylon, ancient Egypt and all its dark paganism.

But that's what happens, you see, when people think the world is defined by sex. But no, it's not.

That is not the elixir of life. That is not the key to meaning, to fulfillment in human beings.

That can be found only in God, our creator, because we're made for him. We're made in his image.

And we're defined by our relationship to God, not by our relationship with our gonads.

[ 23 : 34 ] The world's not defined by chance. It's not defined by sex, nor is it defined by luck.

Genesis teaches us that our misfortunes as human beings, our miseries, are not just down to bad luck.

They're not down to curses. They're not down to bad magic and so on that needs to be warded off by some sort of charms and spells and offerings to our ancestors and all that sort of thing. No. Our human miseries are down to one clear thing, and that is our rebellion against God's moral order of his created universe.

Many, many people in the world today are still bound, aren't they, in bondage to superstition of one kind or another. Many Asian cultures, it's animism, fear of offending the spirits of ancestors and so on, the fear of bringing bad luck and curses on your life and on your household.

Many African cultures live in fear of curses, of spells, of witchdoctors and so on. But it's the same so often in our secular culture here in the West.

There's so many people who are slaves to this sense of luck, reading horoscopes, wearing their lucky charms, look at the footballers, wearing their special socks and their special boots and their lucky charms and all the rest of it.

[ 24 : 55 ] Didn't do the Scots much good, did it, on Friday night. Friends, your future well-being has got nothing to do with luck.

people want to believe that it's got nothing to do with our behavior. But no, that is not what the Bible tells us. It's not bad luck that is our problem, it is sin.

And therefore, the answer to that, the way of true religion, isn't mysteries and mumbo-jumbo and potions and spells and offerings and sacrifices.

The answer is clear, God has revealed it unequivocally. The answer to the problem of sin is obedience and bowing the knee to his command as the creator and lord of the universe.

Now, I could say lots more about these things, and if you weren't here a couple of years ago and we studied these early chapters, you can go back and do that. But I just wanted to make it so clear, you see, that Genesis confronts head-on every other single view of the world, whether it's an ancient view or a modern view.

[ 26 : 11 ] It doesn't just oppose our modern atheistic determinism, although certainly it does, but it also opposes every other false religion, every other superstition in this whole world throughout history.

Into the darkness, into the hopelessness of all paganism, whether it's ancient or modern, whether it's religious or irreligious. Genesis says, no, let there be light in that darkness.

It proclaims one God, the God of creation, and it calls all of us to bow down before him, the one God who made all things. You see, for the believer, whether they were journeying with Moses a long time ago, or whether it's us today, that is a huge comfort, isn't it?

Because the God who made everything in this world is our God, and we know him. Our help is in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, proclaimed the psalmist.

And so when the world feels terrifying, when it feels huge and fearful, when it's full of foreboding, we can remember God, our God, whom we know, he made it all, all of it.

[ 27 : 27 ] And he made you. And you matter to him. He cares. And that's such a comfort, isn't it, whatever we're facing in life.

But of course, it's also a challenge because this one God will brook no rivals, not in your heart, not in mine, and not anywhere in this world. 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. And we will never forget that. But Genesis also teaches us very wonderfully that the God of creation is the God of the covenant. If you turn ahead to Genesis chapter 12, that's really where this story begins to be seen very clear because from here on, that theme dominates so clearly. It's the God of the covenant who defines his chosen people and their whole destiny.

After 11 very grim chapters describing the total alienation of humankind from God because of their sin. At chapter 12, we have the beginning of God's ultimate solution to sin in the call of Abraham. [ 28 : 48 ] After the story of Babel in Genesis chapter 11, at verse 10 of chapter 11, you'll see that the story resumes the genealogy of promise.

The descendants of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Abraham. Then in chapter 12, the first four verses, you could really call the fulcrum, the turning point of the whole of Genesis, the covenant promise that God gives to this man, Abraham.

A pagan man, a man who's living in Ur, the pagan city of the Chaldees, worshipping the moon god along with all the rest of them. He was no different.

But God called him out of all of that by his sovereign grace. And he gives this marvelous world changing promise. My friend Ralph Davis calls this the quad promise.

There's four things in these first four verses. He promises four things to Abraham. First of all, he promises him a place, the land that God would show him. And then he promises him a people.

[ 29 : 53 ] He will have progeny from his seed will come a great nation. And then he promises him God's own presence and protection. He'll bless him and those who bless him and God will curse those who curse Abraham.

And finally, he reveals to Abraham all of this is part of a great plan, a plan of redemption to bring blessing not just to him but to all the families of the earth through him and through his seed.

It's an astonishing turn. And yet the whole story of mankind that we read in Genesis, the whole story of creation narrows right down at this point. And it focuses now on this one family.

And it's through this one family, this one promised seed, that God's blessing and his salvation is going to come to this whole world. From this one man through a great nation at last would come the man, the promised seed through whom all the nations would be blessed when he at last would crush the serpent, destroy his work forever and restore the great glory of God's kingdom here on earth.

And everything that follows in Genesis 12 right through to the end is the story of God's amazing commitment covenant promise. And there are essentially three main cycles of stories that take us from one man, from Abraham, all the way to the birth of a nation, the people of Israel.

[ 31 : 24 ] So what does it mean then? What does it mean for this motley crew of traveling Hebrews, either in Moses' day or indeed in our own day? What does it mean that our God is the covenant God as well as the creator God?

Well, it means that our God is tenaciously, relentlessly committed to doing everything he has promised.

Even, even with a people who deserve a whole lot less. In fact, who deserve absolutely nothing of God's grace and mercy at all.

And that again is one of the great encouragements of this book of Genesis because if God can stick with some of the characters that we read about here, despite everything that they are and everything that they're not, despite everything they do and everything that they don't do, if he can stick with them, then won't his grace be sufficient also for people like us?

Listen to what Paul says in Romans chapter 4 verse 20, giving God's remarkable verdict on Abraham's faith. And it's a verdict of astonishing grace.

[ 32 : 39 ] He says, no distrust made Abraham waver concerning the promise of God. But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God.

The Abraham, who nearly lost his wife Sarah, not just once, but twice, through utterly stupid deception and folly and disobedience to God. The Abraham who argued with God and tried to make his servant his heir.

And then when Isaiah didn't come soon enough, decided to have a surrogate solution with his slave Hagar. That Abraham, yes, that Abraham, that Abraham, he grew strong in his faith, says God, even as he gave glory to God.

Because for all his weaknesses and all his follies, God had hold of his heart. And despite all of his stumblings, God enabled him to be loyal to the God of the covenant to the very end.

And so he did the same with Isaac and with Jacob, who, as we'll see, were actually but shadows of Abraham's stature. They were held despite all by the covenant grace of God Almighty.

[ 34 : 05 ] And you see, that's what Moses wanted his people to keep hold of. It's what he wants us to keep hold of. That's what it means to be God's covenant people.

You remember, perhaps, at the very heart of Abraham's story is chapters 15 to 17 of Genesis, and God confirms his covenant there with Abraham.

And having led him to Canaan, and having rescued him back from Egypt, brought him to Canaan again, he meets Abraham amidst that great scene of fire and of darkness, and he confirms his covenant with him amidst all of that.

Just as, of course, very familiar to the people of Israel who first heard these words, just as he had done at Sinai amidst the fire and the blaze on the mountain there. And in exactly the same way as there at Sinai, God showed his grace to Abraham.

Yes, it was marvelous grace, but it was not cheap grace. It wasn't to be trifled with. In chapter 15, God says to Abraham, well, he gives him the promise, to your seed I will give this land.

[ 35 : 12 ] But after Abraham's lapse in chapter 16, turning to Hagar, you remember, God then reiterates in Genesis chapter 17, reiterates to Abraham what it really means to be in covenant with the Creator God.

And he says to him in chapter 17, verse 2, I am God Almighty, so you walk before me and be blameless, that I may confirm my covenant between me and you.

That's what real faith means, Abraham. It means obedient faith. It means bowing the knee to me as your covenant Lord. And that's exactly what God said in the same way later on through Moses at Sinai.

I am the covenant God who led you out of the land of Egypt, so you will obey me alone. You'll obey my commands. But he then lays out to them in the Decalogue.

Moses is saying to his people, this isn't new. This has always been what it's meant to belong to the covenant God, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

[ 36 : 26 ] And you see, nothing has changed, has it, for us living in these last days as the New Testament people of God. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, said the Lord Jesus, he it is who loves me.

He it is who belongs to me. That's why the Great Commission was to go and make disciples. What does that mean? It means teaching them to obey everything that I, your covenant Lord, have taught you.

In fact, that's the second thing that we learn, you see, in these chapters, what it means to be the covenant people, the people of faith, and what it means to share those great privileges of God's covenant.

The great plan was that Abraham and his seed would be a blessing to the world. ultimately, of course, through these seeds, through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come, but all the seed of Abraham, all of them, were called to be a blessing.

And you see that actually, it's very significant. Immediately after, Genesis 17, immediately after the marking out of the household of faith by circumcision, immediately in chapter 18, we see what that means for the world.

[ 37 : 39 ] It means blessing for the world. We see Abraham interceding in prayer for the pagan city of Sodom, pleading with God for mercy. And we see the result of God rescuing Lot and his family through the intercessions of his servant Abraham, saving them from the coming judgment.

Well, how important for Moses' people, and indeed how important it is for us today to remember what it means to be the people of the covenant, people who are humbled by God's sheer grace, despite all of our sins, despite all of our folly, all that he's done for us.

Therefore, we are a people, surely, who bow our knees before our God, who take him seriously, who walk before him to be blameless, to be holy, to be true, to be shown to be a people that really are truly his.

And how important it is for us, isn't it, not to forget the great purpose of our calling, the sheer privilege that it is to proclaim to the world outside the excellencies of him who called us, like he called Abraham, out of utter darkness and into the light of the glory of the God of creation made known to us in Jesus Christ.

The more we read of what it means to be the people of our God, to know that our God is the covenant God, and that we do live truly in the grip of his relentless grace upon us, the more we grasp that, then the more, surely, like Abraham, we will grow strong in our faith and give glory to God.

[ 39 : 21 ] Our God is the God of creation. He explains this whole wide world. And he's the God of the covenant. He defines his people. He defines our whole purpose in this world.

But third, you see, we mustn't miss, unmistakably, that the God of Genesis is the God of the Christ. He's the God whose purpose, both in his creation and in his covenant, would come to its climax and did come to its climax in the seed of promise, the seed of the woman come at last to destroy the serpent, to destroy the devil and the works of the devil.

What we might call, quite reasonably, the second book of Genesis, Matthew's gospel, tells us exactly that. It opens in this way, the book of the genealogy, the book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

See, there's a very real sense in which the whole of the rest of Genesis, in fact, the whole of the rest of the Bible is but a footnote to Genesis 3, verse 15, the promise of the seed of the woman who would at last destroy the head of the serpent.

All the way through these unfolding stories, the extraordinary patience of the covenant God towards his people is so evident and so encouraging. All the way through, we must never lose sight of that golden thread, of that big story unfolding through it all with relentless persistence.

[ 41 : 03 ] It is the story of the seed of promise from generation to generation, all according to promise unfolding despite all the apparent evidence to the contrary.

And all the way through Genesis at so many stages, there's the expectation for the coming seed. Will this be the one, the seed of the woman promised? When Seth is born after the disaster of Cain and Abel, you're asking, will this be the one?

When Isaac is born, the long-awaited seed of promise, and then Jacob and so on. But now each time, crucial though every single one of these verses, each time we discover there's more to unfold. There's still a future fulfillment to come. Even for Moses' people when they were on the brink of the promised land, they're still awaiting, isn't there? There's a longing for the one who's to come.

Perhaps by then, I'm certain, looking for one from the tribe of Judah because Jacob's deathbed blessings at the end of Genesis talk about the scepter of rule, never departing from his tribe. Moses, when he blesses the tribes at his life's end, likewise. But still, all the way through the story, they're waiting and longing. But for us, of course, it's so different, isn't it?

[ 42 : 19 ] Because for us, we look back, we know that seed has come. We know, as Peter says, what the prophets longed to know. We know the time. We know the place.

We know the exact person that all of these prophecies were pointing to. And in him, all the promises to Abraham have been fulfilled and are being fulfilled still.

All that we read in this book of beginnings in Genesis has come to its climax already in the person and in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said that.

Moses wrote about me. Remember on resurrection day, on that road to Emmaus, with those disciples, not really knowing who Jesus was, and we're told he began with Moses.

No doubt, right back in the book of Genesis, to explain to them all the scriptures concerning himself. These scriptures in Genesis, Jesus himself tells us, these are they that speak of him, of our Lord Jesus.

[ 43 : 27 ] And that's why we shouldn't be surprised at all when we read in Genesis. And we see foreshadowings. We see glimmering shadows. We see so many provocative patterns.

Even way back here in these ancient stories. foreshadowings of what would become at last fully unveiled, absolutely clear and wonderful in the person of our Lord Jesus.

We read about angelic annunciations, don't we? We have special births at the seed of Abraham.

We read about the birth itself of Isaac, the promised seed that brings delight, but also great division and much hostility.

We have the haunting echoes, don't we, of the future. In Abraham's great test on Mount Moriah, as he's told by God to take your son, your only son, the son you love, and offer him as a sacrifice on the mountain.

And so many more. These, you see, are the scriptures that speak of me, says Jesus. And nor should we be surprised at all in the book of Genesis.

[ 44 : 37 ] Genesis. But there's one last thing which I have to mention also before we close, and that is the consistency that we find throughout this book, indeed throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, about the uniqueness, uniqueness of God's one and only way of blessing and of salvation for all the people of this earth.

Just because, you see, God's covenant promise finds its fulfillment in one seed alone, in one man, Jesus Christ, that means there has only ever been one way to share in the blessings that are promised through Abraham to the world.

Since the very beginning, the blessing of Abraham comes to all the families of the earth only, only through them aligning themselves with Abraham's promised seed.

The Apostle Paul is very clear about that. Listen to him from Romans chapter 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, who are the true children of God, says the Apostle, but the children of the promise, who are counted as his offspring.

[ 46 : 04 ] That is, it is not through natural birth, but through being born of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Abraham's true family is the family of true Christian faith.

Now do you see what that means? It's so important. So important, especially today when people are often very confused. You hear people talking, don't you sometimes, about the Abrahamic religions.

And they mean by that Judaism and Islam and Christianity. Be very clear, the Bible says there is only one true Abrahamic faith.

You don't share the blessings of Abraham through his seed Ishmael, as Islam claims to do. No, only through Isaac and his seed.

But nor can you share the blessings of Abraham just by natural descent, even from Isaac, as Jewish people claim by birth. No, Esau, his son, was rejected.

[ 47 : 12 ] Why? Because he despised his birthright. He forfeited his blessing. He would not seek the blessing through God's one chosen seed.

God's way through Jacob, his brother. He rejected God's one seed of faith. No, just as God blessed those way back in Genesis day, he blessed those who blessed Abraham and his seed, Isaac and Israel and so on.

He blessed those who saw clearly God's one declared way of salvation. Also, it is exactly the same today. Paul says to the Galatians, if and only if, if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring.

Here is according to the promise. The God of creation, the God of the covenant, is the God who has revealed himself fully and finally and completely to all creation in the coming of his son, Jesus Christ, and absolutely no other.

And you see, it's he who stands before us today, just as he stood before Abraham all those years ago, and he says to us the same way, I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless, that I may establish my covenant between me and you.

[ 48 : 45 ] Take my yoke upon you. And you will find rest for your souls. The same gospel, the same God.

So friends, whoever you are, wherever you're from, that's the only way to the blessing of God Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth.

The only way. But it is the sure and certain way, the open way, the blessing beyond measure, to everyone who will bow the knee before Jesus Christ, our Lord, the God of creation, the God of the everlasting covenant.

Amen. Let's pray. The Lord said to Abraham, in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed. For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring. We thank you, we thank you, we thank you, Lord, for your grace in creation, bringing the blessing of life itself.

[ 50 : 05 ] We thank you for your persistent grace in covenant, guarding and keeping your people throughout all the ages for glory.

And above all, we thank you for your grace made manifest to all and forever in our Lord Jesus Christ. And our prayer, Lord, is that you would help us to go on bowing the knee to him, that we should be found worthy of him on the great day of his return.

We ask it in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen.