

2—Who can we trust?

Genesis 12:1-3; Romans 4:13-25

When God speaks to Abraham, a whole new chapter in our human story opens up.

- ❑ The world has deliberately opposed God by building a tower at Babel—in direct contradiction of his command to populate the earth (Gen. 11:1-9).
- ❑ God says, ‘That’s enough’. He confuses their languages and makes cooperation among the nations impossible.
- ❑ Their heady ambition is thwarted—and always will be.
- ❑ We’d rather be the ones who are trustworthy. That’s been our problem. God must painstakingly demonstrate that he is the only one who can guarantee our future (Isaiah 48:3-8).
- ❑ The human race doesn’t need its heady ambition and self-promotion and grand plans. It needs its Creator and Father.

Here's what God promises to Abraham. The whole story is in Genesis 12 to 25.

- ❑ The opening verses highlight the central ideas (12:1-3).
- ❑ They outline the hope available to all who share the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:16).

First, Abraham will inherit a homeland.

- ❑ God comes to him (Acts 7:2; cf. Tit. 3:4).
- ❑ He hungers for what God can do, not for what he can make of himself.
- ❑ This homeland is his inheritance (Deut. 4: 37-39).
- ❑ The promise is not mere territory but a land the Lord looks after (Deut. 11:11-12).
- ❑ The inheritance is no less than God’s kingdom—the place over which and from which he reigns among the nations.
- ❑ Abraham becomes the father of nations and ‘inherits’ the world (Rom. 4:13, 17)—not as property but by teaching the nations to trust him.

This promise includes all God’s people.

- ❑ The ‘meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity’ (Psalm 37:11).
- ❑ The meek are blessed because they will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).
- ❑ The world is God’s and he is giving it to us—as a place we can live in now, where he will provide for us, and where we can have a place of significance.
- ❑ Jesus’ disciples want to know what they will ‘have’ (Mark 10:30; Matt. 19:27-30). At this point, in fact, they have some wrong ambitions (Matt. 20:20-28). But Jesus gives them a gracious answer. They will have resources and relationships in plenty—with persecutions—and eternal life to follow. No-one will miss out by following Jesus.
- ❑ We misunderstand inheritance if we don’t see it as a relationship. We inherit eternal life—a life of relationship with God the Father and the Son (Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18; John 17:3).
- ❑ The world as defined by itself must be taken by storm. But the world God promises to his people is comprehensive—including what it really is and will be, and what it is now. God shows Abraham, and us, a better way. Our future is important—and it matters to him.

Second, God promises Abraham a family, and a son to secure it.

- ❑ This doesn't happen until it becomes impossible! God wants Abraham—and us—to know that our life depends on him and not us.
- ❑ Abraham is persuaded that the future he wants is the one God gives—not the one he takes. He waits. And Isaac is born. And from this child, a people or nation is born.
- ❑ We are exhorted to believe the promise as he did (Rom. 4:18-25).
- ❑ Jesus tells us that Abraham delighted to see that his child would be greater than just Isaac—he rejoiced to see *'my day'* (John 8:56). God's family will be secured by no less than God's Son.
- ❑ God has always had all nations in mind, and this happens through his church. All believers in Christ are Abraham's heirs by trusting Christ for our salvation (Rom. 4:16-25).
- ❑ A community created by what God promises is vastly different to the community we make out of our own ambitions and aspirations.
- ❑ Western nations began when the Bible's teaching of promise was well known. It made the idea of progress and hope believable. Without a God, these erode.

Third, God will bless Abraham, and, make him a blessing in the world.

- ❑ This blessing is what makes the world function properly (Gen. 1).
- ❑ The blessing now is nothing less than the full blessing of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3).
- ❑ This blessing is for the good of others. We become fruitful (John 15:4-8).
- ❑ This is the way Jesus Christ will inherit the earth, and it's the same for us.
- ❑ We don't have to make ourselves significant, important, rich and powerful. God is promising, not just to keep the world functioning (the promise to Noah) but to make us significant in his kingdom (Matthew 25:34).

Now, unexpectedly, God communicates to Abraham that he is justified (Gen. 15:6).

- ❑ In a way, this is also a promise because it means Abraham can live in God's approval and favour, not when he succeeds, but immediately, and all the time.
- ❑ This changes life profoundly. It touches us where we hurt the most.
- ❑ From Adam on, we are all sinners. We all die. Just being alive is risky. And the reason for this is that we choose to run life ourselves. We are guilty!
- ❑ Approval by God speaks to this. We are no longer looking over our shoulder to see if trouble is coming. God tells us we are welcomed by him when we trust him—no longer guilty. His approval enables us to trust him for all that happens.
- ❑ When Abraham is asked by God to sacrifice his son, he is ready to do so—confident that God can raise his son from the dead. But God does not want Isaac as a sacrifice. A ram is provided instead and Abraham remembers this by calling that location *'the Lord will provide'* (Gen. 22:13-14).
- ❑ The offering with which we approach God is not ours but his. What he has provided for us is no less than his own Son. If God can provide us with this, he can provide us with everything needful (Rom. 8:32). These promises to Abraham have opened up a world of God's giving in which all who trust in Christ can live.