

Back to Genesis #5

...For An Understanding of God's Redemptive Purpose

Intro: In our past lessons we've seen how integral the teaching of Genesis is to reaching a proper understanding of many issues debated in our society today.

It is the foundational to a proper world view.

It is the foundational to a proper ethics.

It is the foundational to a proper understanding of the nature of marriage.

It is the foundational to a proper understanding of the role of men and women in marriage and in the church.

But in addition to these things, it is the foundational to a proper understanding of the redemptive purpose of God.

In Genesis we see the...

The Need for Redemption (Gen. 3-11)

God made the first human in His image; and they enjoyed a close association with Him. But their continuing presence there was conditioned upon their choice to remain in God's law.

Through Satan's temptation both man and women fell into transgressio; and through them sin entered into the world with its devastating consequence of separation from God.

Perhaps we see in God's response to Adam, Eve and the serpent the first indications of God's redemptive purpose. God spoke to the serpent:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." (Genesis 3:15)

Though there is never any OT or NT elaboration of this text, one could infer from it that from the human race would arise one to conquer Satan; and through Him there would be victory for all who believe in Him. Later Paul would say to Christians, "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20)

And in an act that some could consider to convey the first principles of atonement, God sheds an animal's blood in order to make a covering for the human who has become deeply aware of his shame through sin.

And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21)

The Hebrew word for atonement, "kaphar," meaning to "cover" will function as the OT word for God's way of dealing with sin.

In order for there to be atonement, there must be the shedding of blood.

In order for there to be atonement, sin must be "covered."

As the narrative of humanity continues, the inadequacy of man to rise above his sinful circumstances is illustrated again and again.

Human being became so sinful that God purposed to destroy the earth with a flood.

One might have imagined that such a devastating judgment would cause those of the post-flood world to take the issue of sin more seriously. Regrettably they did not.

The tower of Babel likewise illustrates the human determination to set aside God's will and join together in transgression.

A return to Genesis clearly shows the human need of redemption; but a look back to Genesis also enables us to see:

God's Preview of Redemption

In Genesis 12, Moses' shift in view from the whole human race to the family of Abraham is tied to God's plan to redeem sinful human beings. We see how his choice of Abraham is the opening salvo in a plan that will bring His Son as Redeemer into the world. God declared his redemptive purposes in the promises made to Abraham.

Consider God's promise at Abram's call out of Ur

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you 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 shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

Later when Abraham demonstrated his full faith in God's promise by showing his willingness to sacrifice his son, God reiterated the promise to him:

By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:16-18)

The NT interpretation of the Abrahamic Promise

For NT writers the promise to Abraham was an interpretive "key" that unlocks the mystery of God's purpose in Christ. The promise to bless all nations was in fact a prophecy of the eternal life that God would grant all who followed in the footsteps of Abraham's faith. They would comprise a great "multitude" from among all nations, and would inherit the blessing of eternal life.

Peter shows that the "blessing promised to Abraham was fulfilled when God like Abraham was willing to sacrifice His Son for the sins of mankind, giving the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness:

And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the

earth shall be blessed.' For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways." (Acts 3:24-26)

Peter sees the promise to Abraham as being fulfilled in Jesus who "blessed" the Jews "first" by turning them from their sins. Of course the word "first" implies that Gentiles likewise would receive this blessing. And the blessing would be for those who repented of sins on the basis of the sacrifice that Jesus made for them.

Paul in Galatians three affirms that in a sense God preached the gospel to Abraham in the promise of a "seed" who would bring blessing.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." (Galatians 3:8)

Paul affirms that the "seed" of God's promise to Abraham is a reference to a single descendant, Jesus!

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. (Galatians 3:16)

What Jesus did was make possible the way to the forgiveness of sins leading to eternal life.

Paul pointed out that all who "belong to Christ" are the offspring of Abraham and would be heirs of the promise.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29)

Those who walk in the faith of Abraham are a "great multitude" of which Abraham is the spiritual father. What they have in common is their faith in God.

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." (Romans 4:13-18)

For Paul God's promise of many descendants had a spiritual fulfillment in those who imitated Abraham's faith, not only among Jews, but also among the Gentiles.

Finally we can see that the "blessing" of the Abrahamic promise is the inheritance of eternal life.

Here in Romans 4 Paul indicates that God promised that Abraham would not only inherit the land of Canaan, but he would in fact be "heir of the world." Standing behind that concept is the idea that a time will come when God will make a new heavens and earth; and it will be the inheritance of only those righteous by faith!

At that time believers will have been raised, just like God had given life to Abraham's dead body, to live forever with Him.

Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior; (Titus 1:1-3)

Conclusion: As we reflect upon this development in Scripture we can see clearly that by going "back to Genesis" we can see a preview of God's redemptive purpose. We see His wisdom in declaring His purpose to Abraham and fulfilling in Jesus and the proclamation of the gospel. We can see with Paul a God "who works all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11), who declares the end of a matter from the beginning.

God has been working for millennia on a plan that includes you! But the question is, have you understood God's plan? Do you understand your need for God's forgiveness? Have you put your faith in the "seed" God brought into the world to be your redeemer?