

A New People and a New Place

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[0:00] And open up your Bibles to the book of Genesis.

We will be in chapter 12 this morning, but we're going to pick up at the end of chapter 11 so that we can remember and recall the context in which the story of Abraham in this passage known as Abram, in which the story of Abram begins.

Now, while you're turning there, I do want to say to all of our moms that are here, Happy Mother's Day to our moms, and to remind you all that the theme of Mother's Day is not disconnected from the book of Genesis or from the passage that we're looking at this morning.

The series that we're in is called Patriarchs or the Fathers. And the story of the beginnings of God's creating a people for Himself, they tend to focus upon the patriarchs.

They tend to focus upon the fathers. But if you'll notice as we walk through, there is a unique focus at crucial times upon the women throughout this story. And so we will see Sarah come to the fore, and she's even mentioned in our passage here several times, but we will see her come to the fore.

[1:20] We will see Isaac's wife come to the fore. We will see Jacob's wives, and particularly Rebecca, come to the front of the story of utmost importance. And that is because God promised in Genesis chapter 3 that it would be through the seed of the woman that He would bring the Redeemer into the world, that He would save His people.

And so we cannot forget, we cannot take our eyes off of that. And I want the mothers among us to be reminded, though we are in a series on the patriarchs, that the role of women throughout this story is crucial.

And those women, I believe, connect with real women in real ways. In fact, there are many women for whom Mother's Day is not the greatest day of the year. It's not the time that they want to celebrate the most.

And yet we see here as we walk through these passages, even as we walk through this one, that the women involved in these stories face many of the same difficulties and challenges that you women face today.

And so I want to say happy Mother's Day, and I also want to encourage you to pay attention to the times when women are mentioned throughout these stories because it's at crucial turning points, and they highlight God's saving work for us.

[2:30] We're going to see that in just a minute with Sarah. But for now, I would like you guys to stand, and we will jump in at the end of chapter 11 and reread the last few verses of chapter 11, beginning in verse 27, and go down through verse 9 of chapter 12.

It begins, Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans.

And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

Now Sarai was barren. She had no child. Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife.

And they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

[3 : 33] Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all of the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him.

Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.

When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land.

So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and I on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

[4 : 41] And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negev. Father, we give you thanks for the beginnings of this great story of the life of Abram.

And I pray this morning that you would encourage us through it, and that you would direct our eyes to Abram's great descendant and offspring, Jesus himself. We ask these things in Christ's name.

Amen. We started in verse 27 this morning. First of all, because I want you to remember the context in which the story of Abram is introduced, but also because I want you to understand the broader context.

That is, I want you to connect the story of Abram with everything else that has happened before the introduction of Abram at the end of chapter 11, in the first ten and a half chapters of the book of Genesis.

Because these events are connected. God is not doing something entirely new when he calls Abram. He's initiating a new stage in the plan that he had from the very beginning.

[5 : 49] So if you will recall, Genesis opens with the famous words, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. That is, he created the entire universe. But immediately after that introduction to God's work of creation, we see God begin to form and create the world, the earth, as a place for his people to dwell upon.

That's what God is doing throughout Genesis chapter 1 and even into chapter 2. God is going about the business of creating a place for a people to live so that those people will give him praise and honor and glory.

That plan does not change as we move forward through the book of Genesis. God always has it in mind to create a people and a place for the praise of his great name.

It's what he was doing in the beginning when he created Adam and Eve in his own image, that is, to be his image bearers and to reflect his glory out to the rest of creation. It's what he was doing when he shaped and formed the world that literally in Genesis chapter 1, the land for man to dwell upon.

And it's what he's going to be doing now as he calls a man, Abram, to go to a place called the land. He calls a people and he gives them a place for the sake of the praise of his name.

[7:10] And so this morning I simply want us to consider the call of this man, Abram. I want us to look at the call itself and see what kind of person God called and then we will consider the promise that he gives to Abram.

And then as you work your way through that promise, you see not only does God reveal a promise to Abram, but he tells him the purpose of the promise and then he lays out the plan by which he will bring his promise to full fruition.

But let's take a look at this guy, Abram. We know him mostly as Abraham, but he won't receive that name until chapter 17. So for the next few chapters, I'm going to have to try very hard to call him Abram even though I'm tempted to call him Abraham every time that I think of his name.

But at this point, he's just Abram. That's who he is. But more than that, we need to understand that Abram was not a person of great significance when God called him.

There was nothing about Abram, there was nothing about his life that moved God to choose Abram to be the one through whom he would bring blessing to all the families of the earth.

[8:16] There's nothing in Abram, there's nothing about Abram that is unique or special. In fact, if you look at the few things that we know about who he was before God called him and when God called him, we will see that there were things that we would think from our perspective would lead God to move on to the next person.

Take a look there in chapter 11, beginning in verse 27, what we know about Abram. We know that his father's name was Terah. And we also know from verse 28 that Abram came from the land of Ur of the Chaldeans and then he moved with his father and his father's family to a place called Haran.

Now that is significant because both Ur of the Chaldeans and the city of Haran, which was further in the north from Ur and much closer to the land of Canaan, both of those places at the time that Abraham lived were centers for the worship of the moon god.

That's what those cities were known for and that's what they were dedicated for. And there are details in the text that indicate to us that in fact, Abraham and Abraham's father and Abraham's ancestors were indeed worshippers of this moon god.

You can look through the names that are mentioned. So you have, for instance, Haran, one of the people that are listed here as Terah's children. That is a name associated with the worship of the moon god.

[9:39] And then even the women's names, Sarai, Milcah, Iscah, all those are tightly and closely related to the moon god of southern Mesopotamia.

And so Abram's family, from everything that we can see in this passage and from understanding a little bit of the background, Abram's family was one that was steeped in the worship of a false god.

So Abram is an idolater. He is a pagan. And if you wonder, well, I can't see it as clearly here as I would like to see it, hold your place in Genesis and turn over to the book of Joshua.

And we can see the perspective of Joshua himself as he looks back and speaks under the inspiration of God in Joshua chapter 24, verse 2, Joshua speaks to the people of Israel and he says, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Long ago your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates.

Terah, the father of Abraham, and Nahor. And they, now it's significant that it says they, so reference back to your fathers, and they served other gods.

[10:44] And then verse 3 says, Then I took your father Abraham. So the fathers who served other gods, included Abram himself. He was a pagan. He was an idolater.

God did not look down upon the earth and say, Who can I find who is most worthy to receive my call to be the one through whom I will bring my promises to fulfillment? Had he done that, perhaps he would have chosen Melchizedek.

We will encounter him a few chapters later in the book of Genesis. And he's so great and so worthy of honor that Abraham himself offers a tithe to Melchizedek, gives him a tenth of his possessions.

Melchizedek, king of righteousness is what his name means. And he was the king of Jerusalem, meaning king of peace. There was a godlier man on the face of the earth. There was one who knew God on the face of the earth already in the promised land.

And yet God did not call him. Job lived around the same time as Abraham. Maybe a little bit before or perhaps a little bit after. Job was a man faithful. We know through the book of Job, even through his sufferings, he remains faithful to God for the most part.

[11:49] He will not deny God. He will not abandon him. And yet, God does not choose Job. He comes to Abram, a pagan, an idolater, one who has nothing to commend himself to God.

And yet, that's how God works. That's what God does. There's not a single one of us here in this room this morning that can say that we were worthy of God's saving grace.

That can say that we deserve to receive His mercy. No one can say that. We are all descendants of Adam. We are all deserving of condemnation and punishment. That's who we are.

And yet, God in His mercy comes to Abram. Calls him out of his sin. And he issues the same kind of call when he comes to us.

When God in His sovereign mercy comes to an undeserving sinner. And when He calls them, He calls them in much the same way that He does Abraham. Come out.

[12:51] Now in chapter 12, notice this. The Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

He's calling Abram to leave. He's calling him to leave behind these centers of idolatry. He's calling him to leave behind his father's house with all of its idolatrous trappings.

He's calling him to go to a new land, to a new place. Leave it all behind, Abram. Have nothing to do with your past. This is nothing short of a call for Abram to repent and to turn away from who he had once been.

And He issues the same kind of call to sinners today. When God calls a man or a woman to follow after Him, He calls them to turn away from. Excuse me, to turn away from. He calls them to leave behind the life that they once lived.

So for instance, when Jesus begins to preach the Gospel at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, we are told there that He says to the people, repent! Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand.

[13:57] Or when Jesus is confronted by some religious leaders in the book of Luke, and they question Him about some people who died when a tower collapsed and fell upon them, Jesus' reply to them is, unless you all repent, you will likewise perish.

In other words, Jesus' ministry was very much one of calling sinners to repentance. And the apostles had the same kind of ministry. When Peter stood and preached to his own people, to the Jewish people, he told them that they must repent.

Or when the apostle Paul stood and preached to the Gentiles, he told them consistently that they must repent of their sins and turn and follow after Christ. It's the same kind of call.

When God calls people to follow Him, He calls them to turn away from the lives that they had once lived and to turn to Him. It's the call He issues to Abram, but He does more than that.

Because He gives to Abraham a great promise. Yes, Abram will have to leave. Yes, Abram will have to turn his back on all that he has known and all that he is familiar with.

[15:03] But there is something held out for him. There is a great promise held out. Look at verse 2. I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great.

There are three parts to this promise. Four, if you count the command to go to a land that I will show you, it's implied there that God's going to give him the land. It's made clear later on. We'll see in a moment.

But there are three very clear parts to this promise. I will make of you a great nation, he says. Now that doesn't come without its challenges. In order for Abram to become a great nation, he needs numerous descendants.

And yet, what is the one thing we know about Abram's immediate family? Not his father's family and his brothers and those others. But what do we know about Abram's immediate family?

Take a look back in our passage here in chapter 11. Verse 29. Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, the daughter of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Izcah.

[16:11] Now, the one thing we learn about Sarah in this passage. Now, Sarai was barren. She had no child. She had no child.

Abraham, the childless man, is promised that he will become, his descendants will be made into a great nation.

This is an incredible promise. And it grows to be all the more incredible as the years pass by, as we march through the life of Abram and we see that immediately, God does not immediately begin to give him children.

No, Sarah remains barren for years and years after the promise is given. So that the promise grows in its incredulity.

It grows in the sense of this can't possibly be real. How can this happen? At this point, it's difficult. Later, it will be impossible. But God says that He's going to do it.

[17:11] He's going to make him into a great nation. And then He says, I will bless you. Now, we oftentimes get hung up on the word bless and we want to narrow it down to very strict confines and say, this is precisely what God means by to bless.

But in reality, for God to bless someone is a broad ranging term. It can mean all sorts of things throughout the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It can, and oftentimes in the Old Testament, does include health and prosperity.

It does often include the gift of wealth. And we will see that in Abram's life. We will see that God miraculously provides him with wealth, even at times where Abram is doing things that you would think God would punish him and deprive him of things.

Even in those moments, we find God supplying him with great wealth. We find at times that God's blessing includes health. But then, of course, we find many other times in the Bible that God's blessing comes even though he's withholding riches and health from his people.

Even when God holds back good health in your life and you may be sick and you may be dealing with various things, you can't immediately conclude that you don't have the blessing of God upon you. Or if you live in poverty, you can't immediately conclude that you don't have the blessing of God upon you.

- [18:26] Because as you look through the story of God's people, as it weaves its way through the Scriptures, some are wealthy, some live long lives, some are very poor and die young.
- Some experience all the good things that you might imagine that you would want to experience in this life. Others live lives deprived of the vast majority of those things that we would think would indicate a life blessed by God Himself.
- Consider the life of the Apostle Paul. Imprisoned multiple times, beaten multiple times. He says, I often went hungry. How could Paul go hungry?
- Starving? How could he be famished? He's doing the work of God. Surely God is blessing him. Of course God is blessing him. Of course God is with him. In the midst of great pain, in the midst of great sorrow, the blessing of God is broad.
- And he sovereignly determines how his blessing plays itself out within the lives of his people. Here though, Abram is merely told, I will bless you.
- [19:38] I will bring goodness into your life. And then he moves on and he says, and I will make your name great. Now that phrase is significant within the context of Genesis.
- Genesis. Because in chapter 10, or in chapter 11, excuse me, we came across a story in which there were a people who were working to make for themselves a great name.
- Those who built the Tower of Babel did it so that they might have a name. So that they might be known. So that they might be famous. And yet God comes and says, Abram, I'm going to give you a great name.
- Not because of your accomplishments. Not because of your achievements. But because of my sovereign choice to bless you. And then what do you see as you come to the New Testament?
- What do you see associated with Abraham more than anything else? Paul says that those who want to be righteous before God must have the faith of Abraham. That's a great name to have.
- [20:45] To be the one who is known as the archetype. The one that we pattern ourselves after and say, if we want to follow after Christ, if we want His righteousness to count as ours, we need to have a faith like Abraham.
- Oh, he received a great name. But not quite yet in the story of his life. All of those things though, being made into a great nation, receiving the blessing of God, being given a great name, all of those serve a greater purpose.
- Notice how verse 2 is worded at the end. I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. Now some of your translations may simply say and you will be a blessing.
- But a clearer translation that brings out the meaning of the original is so that, in other words, this is the purpose. Why is God calling Abraham? What's the purpose of the original command to go?
- And what's the purpose of the blessings that follow that command? The promises that follow that command? What is the purpose? Why are they being given? It's not limited to the life of Abraham. It is so that Abraham will in fact be a blessing to others.
- [22:00] That's the purpose of the promises. Abraham, I'm giving you promises, but they're not limited to you. No. You are to be a blessing for others.
- But how does that happen? What is God's plan for causing Abraham to become a blessing to other people? He lays it out for us. Verse 3, I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse.
- You notice that? How is the blessing of Abraham to be passed on to others? How can that happen? How can that be? It happens when others in turn bless Abraham.

But if you want to be cut off from the blessings, if you don't want Abraham to become a blessing to you, you merely need to dishonor him. And then the curse will come upon you. So the plan of God is to take Abraham and use him to bless other people and that blessing comes about as those other people in turn bless Abraham.

Now if that is only meant to be fulfilled in a very small limited way in the life of Abraham or even in the life of his descendants, his immediate descendants, then we ourselves are without hope.

[23 : 18] But as we turn to the New Testament, we see that the writers of the New Testament conceive of the blessing of Abraham and how we receive it as being available far more broadly than just those who came into contact with Abraham or with his immediate descendants.

I want you to hold your place here and I want you to turn all the way in the New Testament to the book of Galatians. I think that if we're going to rightly understand the blessing to Abraham and the blessing that passes from Abraham to others, we need to understand what the New Testament writers, what the apostles have to say about this.

Because while the blessing is broad and while the blessing does play itself out in Abraham's life, many times through material blessing, we see that ultimately the blessing that comes through Abraham is not material blessing.

It's far, far greater than that. In Galatians 3, verse 8, in the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.

Now, Abraham, I want you to pause there. Paul conceives of the gospel having been proclaimed to Abraham long ago. the gospel itself preached to Abraham.

[24 : 34] How? Well, here's how. In saying, in you shall all the nations be blessed. See that?

See the plan of God to spread the blessing of Abraham, to make Abraham a blessing? And it results in, and this is from Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

And now Paul says that that was the preaching of the gospel beforehand to Abraham. That in him all the families of the earth would in fact be blessed. How does the blessing of Abraham come to people?

How does it come? Continue to read. Verse 9, So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

those who would be blessed, those who would be among those who receive the blessing that came to Abraham, how can they receive it?

[25 : 35] Well, you say, we'll bless Abraham and his offspring. Yes. But how do the New Testament writers understand that? They understand that to be faith in Jesus. Jesus whom Paul goes on in this chapter to define as the offspring of Abraham, the primary seed of Abraham.

Now, right here, Paul says, you want the blessing of Abraham? You bless Abraham by trusting in Christ. And then, you receive his blessing. Verse 14, In Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham will come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

It comes in Christ. God always had a plan. God was not making decisions on the fly. God is not in emergency mode as we approach Genesis chapter 12 because of the debacle in the garden or because of the problem of the tower or because of the flood that came upon the earth.

God is not in emergency mode in Genesis chapter 12. God is sovereign in Genesis chapter 12 and God is enacting the plan that he always had from the very beginning and it comes to its final fulfillment in Christ so that all those who trust in Christ receive the blessing of Abraham.

and the Spirit to live within them who guarantees eternal life for all those who belong to Jesus. There is great hope for us in Genesis chapter 12 and in the promise.

[27:03] These promises are not just for Abraham. They are for all the families of the earth. Now, how does Abraham respond? How does he respond to these incredible promises?

promises that at this point seem to be difficult and later will be impossible in Abraham's mind for God to fulfill. How does he respond to this?

A God that he does not know calls him to leave behind the gods that he has known because they are false. To leave behind his family. To leave behind his homeland.

To go to a land that he doesn't know where it is. He doesn't know how far he's going to travel. He doesn't even know in what direction he's going to travel necessarily. How does he respond?

Verse 4. So Abraham went as the Lord had told him. Now we are tempted here to marvel at Abraham's obedience as if his obedience itself is what brings the blessing to him.

[28:09] But the writer of Hebrews tells us that it was by faith that Abraham obeyed and went to a land. That's the obedience of Abraham.

The obedience of Abraham is that he trusts in these promises. He believes. He responds in faith and that faith, as faith always does, issues in obedience. And so Abraham goes as the Lord had told him.

And we're told that Lot went with him which will become an important detail in the next few chapters. But Lot goes with him. Abraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. That's middle age for Abraham.

Alright? He's going to live to be pretty old so that's middle age for Abraham. As I said, things are not impossible yet. They will only get impossible as the decades begin to add up for him. But at this point, he's in the middle of his life and he changes his life.

He repents of who he once was and the gods that he once followed. And he turns to follow this God to go to that land. And God takes him, as you know, into the land of Canaan.

[29:13] Verse 5, Abraham took Sarah his wife and Lot his brother's son and all their possessions that they had gathered and the people that they had acquired in Haran and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. And when they came to Canaan, we're told, Abraham passed through the land.

He's just walking along through the land. He does not yet know where am I to stop? How much land is God giving to me? And where precisely is that land going to be located?

So far, he only knows to go to the land of Canaan. And what we see Abraham doing as we walk through these verses is he moves from the northern part of Canaan all the way down at the end to the Negev, which is the southernmost part of the land of Canaan.

So Abraham moves from the northernmost part of Canaan to the southernmost part of Canaan. In other words, there's a sense in which as Abraham travels and as he walks, God is showing to him the land that he's going to receive.

But God makes it explicit. Verse 7, The Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring, I will give this land. All this land that you see before you, all of this, I will give to your descendants, to your seed.

[30:25] But I want you to pay attention to how he responds. Two times, Abram responds in this way. So there, he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him.

Abram's response to the promise of God is worship. And he's not worshiping just anywhere. He's worshiping, in verse 6, he had passed by Shechem at a place called the Oak of Moreh.

It's a large tree. These types of trees were larger than most of the typical trees that you would find in the land of Canaan. And because it was such a large tree and because it was situated in the place called Shechem, which was sort of a valley and a plain in between two large hills, because of that, this particular tree was a place of worship for the Canaanites.

It was a place at which they would often set up their shrines and worship to their false gods. And yet, now here comes Abram into the land and what does he do? He claims the very spot where these people worship their false gods.

He claims it for the worship of the true God. He's on the right track. He knows what he's been called to do. He's called to a place for the praise of God's name.

[31 : 42] He does it again. Verse 8, From there he moved to the hill country on east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and I on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

As he moves from the land from north to south, what we see him doing is stopping, building altars, and worshiping the Lord. Abram understands that what God has called him to do is to go to a place for the praise of His name.

That's what God is doing throughout the book of Genesis. He is creating a people and giving them a place where they might live to praise His name.

And that has not changed throughout history. That has not changed. God's plan is still to create a people for Himself, to put them in a place so that they might praise His name.

But the emphasis upon who those people are and what that place looks like, it changes as we enter into the new covenant age. Jesus brings fundamental changes to the ways in which the promises to Abraham are fulfilled and in the ways in which the calling to Abraham are played out in the lives of the people that God calls to Himself.

[33 : 01] I think one of the places that we can see this most clearly is in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman. In fact, it's the last place I really want you to turn. I want you to turn over to John chapter 4 because I want you to see just how significant Jesus' words are to the Samaritan woman.

It's a story in which Jesus unexpectedly begins to have a conversation with a woman, which was odd, who is also not a Jew, which makes it even more odd, as He sits by a well in Samaria.

Now, Samaria technically is in the land of Israel. It is in the land of Canaan. It's in the land of promise. In fact, Jesus, as He talks with this woman, is probably not too far from the place where Abraham set up that first altar.

He's in the same basic region, the same basic area. And when Jesus begins to initiate this conversation with her, I want you to notice that there is an emphasis upon who the people of God are and where these people will worship.

Let's jump in in verse 21. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

[34 : 13] Now, pause for a moment there and think about that. Here he's talking about place. Where are the people of God to worship God? Where is that supposed to happen?

Well, at this time in the history of Israel, that has been narrowed down to Jerusalem. And even in Jerusalem, to the temple, to Mount Zion.

That's where the proper worship of God happens. That's where sacrifices are made. That's where God's people are called to go to offer their sacrifice of praise up to God Himself.

First, the entire land as Abraham is setting up shrines. In the early history of Israel, they are able to move the tabernacle to different parts of the land. But by the lifetime of David and Solomon, things are narrowed down to the city of Jerusalem.

And from that point on, Jerusalem is the place that God has authorized for His people to worship specifically on Mount Zion in the temple. And yet, Jesus says something earth-shattering here for a Jew.

[35 : 17] He says, the time is coming when you're not going to worship on this mountain, the mountain there in Samaria. You won't worship here because that's where the Samaritans worshipped. They weren't allowed into the temple in Jerusalem.

You won't worship here, but neither will you worship in Jerusalem. That's what's shocking. You won't worship in either of those places because God is redefining the place where He will be worshipped.

Verse 22, now we get to the issue of God's people. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know. For salvation is from the Jews.

Jesus does not step over and ignore the Old Testament. He does not ignore the unique call upon the life of Abram and God's purpose for the descendants of Abraham.

He does not ignore any of that. He says very plainly to this Samaritan woman, your worship is not acceptable because you don't worship in the right place and you don't worship God in the right ways because you're not of God's people.

[36 : 20] You don't know. You don't have His full revelation. You don't know how to worship God. You're not the right people. You're not in the right place. Don't worry though. There's coming a time when you won't have to worship here or there in Jerusalem.

And more than that, he adds, notice, but, verse 23, the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.

God is still seeking a people. He's still doing that. But now the promise made to Abram that through him blessing would come to all the families of the earth, now in Christ that promise is coming to its true and ultimate fulfillment because no longer will God's blessing be limited and circumscribed to this people in this place, but now it will go out into all places to all peoples and wherever God calls His people to Himself and wherever they come together to worship in spirit and in truth.

There you have a place where God is rightly worshipped so that God now has a people scattered throughout the earth and He has a place found all over the earth in which they praise His name.

And that was always His plan. God is not constantly adjusting His plans because things don't work out. God is constantly moving history so that history accords with His plan.

[37 : 56] And His plan was always to create a people and give them a place so that they might exist for the sake of the praise of His great name. And your life matters in so much as you become a part of those people.

There are still those who are outside of the people of God. What Jesus says to the woman of Samaria is not entirely negated by what He says in the following verse.

Because yes, there is a way for those who are not Jews, who are not descendants of Abraham to come and to worship Him. That's available. And there was a sense in which that was available in a much more limited way even throughout the Old Testament because we do see instances in which God calls non-Jews into the people of God.

Consider Ruth, the Moabitess. She's not a part of the people of Israel. She's a part of their enemies. And yet, she becomes one in the line leading to King David and ultimately to Jesus.

Or consider Naaman, the Syrian, who is healed while many Jews are left out and to whom God sends His prophet so that he might hear good news. There are those individuals scattered here and there throughout the Old Testament.

[39 : 13] There's always slight hope of salvation for those outside of the Jewish people that they might come in. But now that hope has expanded.

Now, now all those who are of the faith of Abraham, all those who trust in the promises, that is, all those who know the truth and believe the truth, can belong to the people of God.

Which implies that those who do not know the truth and those who reject the truth do not belong to the people of God. So the fundamental question as we consider Abram and his call and his response to that call, the fundamental question that we ought to have is, what are we doing with the Word of God?

Do we believe it? Do we trust it? Do we turn away from our sins when it calls us to repent? Do we follow hard after the promises no matter what it might cost us?

Do we join ourselves to the people of God and stand with them in worship? Are we following after him? Are we trusting in the offspring of Abram?

[40 : 20] Jesus Christ himself? Is that what we are doing? Because if you're doing that, you're a part of his people. If you're doing that, you're among those who worship in spirit and in truth. But if you do not do that, you are not a part of those who belong to him.

And his call to you this morning is repent and believe. let's pray. Thank you.