**Master Plan - #4**

1. Paradise made
2. Paradise lost
3. East of Eden
4. Go West!

Chaps 4-11 are a sorry take of the ever-increasing rejection of God, climaxing with the building (or attempt to build) the tower of babel where man would ‘Make a name for himself’ – 11: 4.

God acts again – not in judgement this time, (remember that he’s promised never to destroy the world again) but in mercy. He acted in a way to hinder, slow down the advance of man and thus to save them from themselves. He confuses language and scatters them.

But what has become abundantly clear in all this – Eden, Cain, The Patriarchs, Noah, is that Man cannot be trusted to himself. He simply will not and cannot do and be the people God called them to be. It’s a huge question as to why God set it up like this – with the possibility of failure, and one maybe I’ll come back to another time – but he did. What we see is that he gave people time, he even hit the reset button once with Noah, but nothing seemed to work. Man left to himself just would not walk in friendship with God, he repeatedly and continually went his own way and rejected god.

It’s a sad and sorry tale. But God is not finished.

In fact, in his wisdom all this opened the way for the next phase of his Master Plan’ to be put into effect. In Chap 12 God acts decisively, he reclaims the initiative and sets a trajectory in history that continues to this day – one which we are a part of.

The significance of what God does here in Gen 12 cannot be underestimated. The rest of the Old Testament and the whole of the New Testment of the Bible are the outworking of this first promise of God to Abram.

Here they are – this is what he said to him, this is what God promised Abram.

‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ‘I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

And with these words God reverses the trend east from Eden, the continuous shift east, symbolising mans shift away from God. Abram’s home was here – show on the map, and God is going to direct him West, a reversal of the drift East. The directional change was symbolic of the spiritual change, for this was a fresh start, a new dawn, a brand-new phase in the Master plan of God for planet earth.

Let me take you back to the very start – remember God created mankind as the pinnacle of his creation; from the very start, when God breathed the breath of life into him there was a very special relationship between God and mankind. No other created thing had the same relationship. Remember how at the beginning God would go and walk and speak with A & E; he had entrusted them to look after and develop the new earth and it was theirs to enjoy at the same time. There was a beautiful friendship, and relationship between them. This was God’s intention, his desire – to have people with whom he could reveal and share his glory. Not because he needed it – God is self-sufficient and doesn’t need anything or any ne, but because he is kind and loving his nature is to share what is his with others who can enjoy and appreciate it.

And that is what happened in Eden – until the disobeyed and sin can in and broke that beautiful relationship. Though the original state of relationship was broken He gave time and opportunity for people to at least seek and follow him – but it was clear that the heart of mankind was set against him. What a tragedy.

But his plan isn’t finished! God is not confined or confounded by our folly! No, he acted in a new way. He still wanted a people to share his original intent. His intention actually hadn’t changed. **And so we see him here intervening in total grace and mercy and kindness** to start something completely new.

* Abram was not seeking God – he was living in Ur, a prosperous, modern city. Lots of trade and business; city dominated by religion and worship of all sorts of idols and god’s. Centre of a moon worshipping cult – Jewish tradition says that his father was a priest in this. The point is then that he certainly didn’t choose God - God chose him, called him, plucked him from that dead way of life!
* Neither was it because he was good or special or anything extraordinary. In fact from the beginning the odds were stacked against what God said! **Gen 11:30** tells us that Sara his wife was unable to have children – yet God promises him that a nation will come from him!

What we’ll see over and over again in the rest of the Bible is how it’s not every human being that is part of the family of God, to enjoy his blessings, it is those he chooses and that he chooses the most unlikely of people.

It’s important to notice the **three main parts of this very first, but history changing promise of God to Abraham:**

‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

‘I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

* People – ‘I will make you a great nation’ God is here promising Ab that he will be watching, leading, involved with his family. In other words, I’ll be treating you in a unique way; your descendants will be my special people. A people, *a kingdom where God is king again*
* Place – ‘Go to the land I will show you’ – unknown to him at the time, but this will be the land of Canaan. His people would have a place of their own. So will the people of God!
* Blessing – ‘You and your descendants will be blessed, and through them all peoples on earth will be blessed’. Here is the reversal of the judgement and curse God pronounced when A&E sinned. He says to Ab that he will be for him, not against. Here then is the first part of the rescue from the effects of sin. God is rescuing them man and saying that he’ll work though him and his descendants to rescue, save people from all over the world, not just limited to Abs family.

It is clear then that this promise – or ‘Covenant’ - that God made with Abraham was the start of something new. Abs descendants would be God’s people, living in God’s place under God’s rule and as a result, enjoying God’s blessing. Do you see how that mirrors the original at Eden? It is the promise to reverse the fall and a brand new start.

I’ve taken time to explain this – but miss this and you miss the whole point of the rest of the Bible; because the rest of the Bible is about how God works out this new plan, how he keeps this promise and how it turned out to be bigger and greater than Ab could ever have imagined.

Now, there’s one other thing I want to highlight this morning: It was all very well God promising all this to Abraham, but for him experience it, to enjoy the blessings of it he had to actually believe what God said, and the evidence of that was acting on it. So he had to actually leave his country and take his family to well, he didn’t know where to! He had to trust God for the birth of a son, when his wife was unable to have children. He had to completely and utterly become dependent on God – and he did.

And because he believed God (and therefore did what he said) God says these amazing words about him ‘Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.’ **Gen 15:6**. God reckoned, counted, considered Ab to be righteous because he believed. Righteous is to be good and acceptable, without fault. God considered Ab to be without fault simply because he believed him! Not because he did anything or had become something or achieved something – *but get this* – simply because he believed and acted on it.

**This is HUGE!** Here is God showing us that the new way for any of us to be accepted, counted and without fault by him, and therefore received back into friendship and his family, is to believe him and let him be king/leader of our life.

What we’re seeing here is that the effects of the fall/of sin are not reversed by anything people did, but rather by the actions of God. He chose and called Abram, he gave him the promises, and all Ab had to do in order to get the benefits, to come back into the family of God was to believe and obey!

And it’s the same with us! To be accepted by God, declared faultless and innocent simply requires us to accept and believe and trust him and what he’s done.

**The promise to Ab found fulfilment in Jesus** – we’ll come to that. But Jesus is ultimately the saviour, the promised one, the serpant crusher. We are restored to God, transformed within and without when we trust and obey him. It’s that simple. Have you done it? If not then why not today? Believer? Then thank God, and act accordingly!