

God reveals Himself through His covenant with Abraham

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and chapter 15

God reveals Himself.....creation (last week)....law, JESUS, Scriptures....

God also reveals Himself in the covenants that He enters into.....just as we discover a lot about a human person by what he/she promises to do.....so we discover a lot about God by the covenants that He enters into/agreements that He makes.....

In OT we see God entering into a number of binding covenants....some are with the whole world (like that with Noah).....most are with the People of Israel.....and of course this is all preparatory to the revealing of the New Covenant....

Look specifically this morning at what God reveals about Himself through His covenant with Abraham....which had a number of different elements to it...

1. To bless Abraham.....quote 12:2....and we see evidence of that blessing through his life's story...

2. He covenants to give him descendants....the covenant is quite specifically that Abraham will be the father of a great nation.....quote 12:1; 13:16; 15:5; and 17:3-7..... the reason why this promise is initially perplexing is that Abram and Sarai have no children, now old, Sarai is unable to bear children.....

3. And with this promise of descendants comes a related promise that they will occupy a land of their own.....12:7, 13:15, 15:18,19, 17:8....and we see the promise starting to be fulfilled when in ch 23 Abraham buys the cave of Machpelah...

4. And the fourth strand of the covenant is that God will so bless the people that they will themselves be a blessing to those around them.....12:3, 22:18...

This is a mighty and a multi-faceted promise...

And from the scale and the nature of these promises we see something of God's heart and God's purposes made plain.....

1. That God reveals Himself as a God of generous grace, who's love for people is unconditional.....the entire covenant with Abraham, is about what GOD will do, *unconditionally*.....

That is shown most clearly in the events of ch 15.....Abraham contributed nothing to this covenant...the only party making a promise is God Himself.....

Translate this into the new covenant...and to ourselves....our God is a God of generous grace, who loves us unconditionally.....**sit under a waterfall of divine love**

2. Secondly He shows His desire to create a People for Himself.....who will occupy a land.....

While the promise to Abraham was fulfilled in the old covenant people occupying the land of Judah.....the greater fulfilment of the promise to Abraham is to be found in these NEW covenant days....when God is still creating a people for Himself in a church...and the land not restricted to the borders of Palestine, but extending to "the ends of the earth"

The command to Abraham in 13:17 “Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you”

We need to have this big vision for the church and for its impact upon the city, the region and the nation....we need to “**lift up our eyes**” and see what is around us....and we need a wide vision of what the Lord is calling us to.....

Have we lost hope for a church like the number of stars in an African sky....and have we settled for a small influence upon the land, as the nations slips away from Jesus and the life of His kingdom....?

3. God wants a people for Himself, who will occupy the land, for the simple purpose that “the peoples of the earth might be blessed through us”that is what God wants, He wants to bless the earth...and He wants His people to be the agent of His blessing.....

That has to be our vision for the Church of Jesus.....not that we escape into an ark that protects us FROM the world...but that we live cross-shaped lives of service right in the heart of the world, so that whatever the world might throw at us, we are there to be a vehicle for God to display His love for the world in its brokenness and need and fragility and sin and distractions and degradations.....**we are to follow our Master into the thick of it**.....wanting above all else to be a blessing to it....in the lives we live, the love we give, the words we speak, the forgiveness we offer, the hope we share, the sacrifices we make, the time we give to others and our willingness to get our hands dirty in showing calvary love to those in any kind of need around us, be it material, emotional or spiritual....

HOPE 2014

The church in Laos

Our daily work

Much more that we see of God in His covenant with Abraham.....but **we see these three things**....

- **that the God who acted in unilateral love for Abraham**, in blessing Him and promising him a future...**is a God of generous grace still**, who lavishes His love on us, and does so without condition or inhibition.....inviting us to live in its full light and not linger in the shadows....to stand under the full flow of the waterfall of His grace and never to stand apart from it.....

- **and that our God of generous grace calls a People, still, and asks them to occupy a land**.....because He works *through* His people and He longs for the greater coming of His Kingdom on earth, for more stars in the sky, more people who know His salvation.....and He invites us to “**walk the length and breadth of the land**” of this city and region, with a longing that right here God’s kingdom might come....

- **and all because God want to bless the world He has made and all His people**....through a church turned outwards in love to those around us.....

THIS, wonderfully, is the God revealed in the covenant to Abraham,, whose purposes in the world are wide and good.....

Amen