

Text: Genesis 11-12:9

Theme: A New Beginning

Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi during Holy Communion Service on 6/09/2015 at 10.30am

Three New Beginnings

As we begin our study of Genesis 12: 1-9, it would be wise to ponder the meaning of the word "Genesis" again. It means "a beginning; origin", and at the risk of repeating what I have said earlier, **"we cannot understand the significance of the entire gospel message until we understand Genesis 1-12."**

In these chapters, we see the continual degeneration of humanity and God's ever seeking grace of redemption. **At every point in man's fall and disobedience, God gives him another chance and a better alternative to his contrived plans of independence and greatness.**

In Genesis 3 **after man's first disobedience, their thought and plan to look good before each other and before God was to cover their nakedness with leaves** which was not good enough. **What did God do? He provided them with leather from the skin of an animal – blood was shed and some propitiation was achieved.** God provided what was acceptable, lasting and efficacious. That experience marked the first beginning and also the first act of grace with the **promise of Genesis 3:15 about the seed of the woman who will destroy the kingdom of Satan who caused and is causing the downfall of man.**

One would have thought that human beings had learnt their lesson that disobedience to God does not pay and a desire for greatness outside of God's will ends in disaster. The thoughts and intention of man became so wicked. The human-race apostatized to the extent that the earth was filled with violence and people who had absolutely forsaken the Lord, that God decided to destroy the world by a flood in Genesis 6. But God in His usual character, offered another chance to His creation. He saved Noah to begin another human line. **(Genesis 6:7-8; Gen 9:1). "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful, and increase in number and fill the earth". After the first great beginning, the Lord destroyed that generation with water. Now the second great beginning occurs. Noah is commanded by God to go forth, be fruitful, and replenish the earth.**

As soon as they began to multiply, they began to build Babel. They built a city in rebellion against God's command to replenish the earth; they would not spread out over the face of the earth. They decided to build a tower so they could always see the way back. They did not want to obey the Lord but instead, again, rebelled against the Lord. They wanted to be great in their own ways and forsook the Lord. **Read Genesis 11:4. They said, ... "Come let us build ourselves a city...so that we can make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."**

What happened? This time the Lord did not come with waters to destroy them, but He came with confusion of language to scatter them as He had originally commanded.

The third great beginning of which we read of is the beginning of a chosen nation through Abram that would serve Him. The Lord allowed the Gentile nations to live in apostasy, serving idols, and forsaking the Lord. **In this third great beginning, this peculiar nation through Abram was chosen to serve God. It is a type of His chosen race, His church, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. But let us see how it all started.** Abram's father had planned to travel to Canaan and God must have spoken to Abram also (We know that from

Acts 7:2-4 that this promise was made to Abram *before* he left Ur of the Chaldeans but after getting to Haran, he settled there (Genesis 11:31).

Now that his father was dead and he was compelled to a more complete obedience, God repeated the promise. Abram's partial obedience did not take God's promise away. Instead, it meant the promise was on "hold" until Abram was ready to do what the LORD said.

Now we enter Genesis 12.

Read Genesis 12:1-3.

The LORD had said to Abram: "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you... I will make you into a great nation...I will make your name great...I will bless those who bless you..."

Can you notice the contrast with Genesis 11:4. **In Genesis 11:4, human beings wanted to make a name for themselves outside God and they failed woefully so much so that they did not understand each other anymore. It was real confusion. But in Genesis 12:1-3, God is the one who has chosen to bless humanity through a representative of his.** He chose to make a great name for him and to be his provider and protector. From now onwards, God has chosen for Himself a man through whom the promise of Genesis 3:15 will be fulfilled.

These are *God's* promises; notice how often God says **I will** in these verses. Genesis chapter 11 is all about the plans of man. Genesis chapter 12 is all about the plans of God.

I will make you a great nation: God promised to make a **nation** from Abram. He will have enough children and grandchildren and further descendants to populate a nation.

I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. Not only was Abram promised a blessing, but God also promised to *make him* a blessing, even to the point where all the families of the earth would be blessed in Abram.

"Blessed to be a Blessing". That sums up the Christian Life. Abraham would be taken out of his comfort zone, with nothing but a promise from God. He would be protected by God and this is what I love, **He would have worldwide influence** - through him "All the families on earth would be blessed". Of course, looking back, we see that **Jesus came from Abraham's line so this promise of Blessing the families of the world was fulfilled in Christ, when he brought salvation to the world.**

God promised to bless Abram and to **make [his] name great**. There is probably no more honored name in history than the name of Abram, who is honored by Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you: God also promised He would **bless those who bless you** and to **curse him who curses you**. This remains true today and is a root reason for the decline and death of many empires.

"When the Greeks overran Palestine and desecrated the altar in the Jewish temple, they were soon conquered by Rome. When Rome killed Paul and many others, and destroyed Jerusalem under Titus, Rome soon fell. Spain was reduced to a fifth-rate nation after the Inquisition against the Jews; Poland fell after the pogroms; Hitler's Germany went down after its orgies of anti-Semitism; Britain lost her empire when she broke her faith with Israel." (Barnhouse)

GOD HAS CHOSEN ME AND YOU! When God chose Abram, He chose a man who would influence nations, and God has called me to do the same. Jesus says to me and you in **Matthew 28:19-20 :19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in**

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Abram was no spring chicken when he left Haran. He was a sprightly 75 year old, with a beautiful wife called Sarai who was 65. Abram was already a wealthy man. He had servants and probably walked out of Haran with quite an entourage of staff and livestock. God told him he would be blessed beyond that. I can't imagine packing my stuff into a removal truck and saying to the driver to get going without knowing my destination. "DON'T ASK QUESTIONS! JUST DRIVE!" Sounds like a terrorist trying to hijack a vehicle. He stopped at a place called Shechem right in the middle of the promised land and it says in Genesis 12:7 "Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants."

Once Abram was in the land, God reminded him of His promise. The land Abram saw belonged to Abram and his descendants. Abram never owned any of this land except his burial plot (Genesis 23:14-20). Yet God's promise was enough evidence to assure Abram that he did indeed own the whole country.

And there he built an altar to the LORD: The altar was important to Abram because it was a place to meet with God, to offer sacrifice for sin, to show submission to God, and to worship God. I'm with Abram. I would put up some kind of landmark, and I would get down on my knees and thank God that He showed up, because I was beginning to get dirty looks from my wife and servants.

He pitched his tent: Even in the land God gave him, Abram never lived in a house - he lived in a tent. Tents are the homes of those who are just passing through and do not put down permanent roots.

We too are to live like tent-dwellers, as pilgrims on this earth (1 Peter 2:11). We should live as people who have their permanent dwelling place in heaven, not on earth. **A pilgrim isn't a drifter; a pilgrim has a goal. Abram's goal (and our goal) was God's heavenly city (Hebrews 11:8-10, 14-16).**

Abram did not yet have a land or a house of his own - Just the knowledge that God is his God and a promise that He will provide. **So, I will pray like Abraham "Lord, show me where to go from here. When I arrive, let me know, so like Abram I can recognize that You are in this.**

Verse 8: From there he went on towards the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. **There he built an altar to the Lord and called (continued to call) on the name of the LORD. I would too. Such a strange way to travel, without a map, without a tourist guide, just calling on God for guidance and help.** Eventually he travelled right throughout the land of Canaan trusting only the promises of the God who had called him.

LORD, I NEED THAT KIND OF FAITH. LEAD ME EACH DAY. HELP ME WAIT FOR YOUR TIMING, AND FOR YOU TO OPEN DOORS. I CALL UPON YOU LORD, TODAY. May God bless you all as you step out in faith today and look for the opportunities God gives you as you listen for His voice in whatever circumstances you face today.

Now let us go back and observe a little detail about Abram's departure from Haran in Genesis 12:4: So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him...

This was partial obedience by Abram. God commanded him to go leave his country, his people and his father's household... and he brought his nephew Lot.

Lot would not be a blessing to Abram. He would be nothing but trouble and inconvenience. Let us be careful of partial obedience to God's commands.