

Tuesday, January 7, 2020—Genesis 20-22

God is powerful. Man is weak. Holiness is attractive. Sin is destructive. The relationship between holy God and sinful man is, therefore, nothing short of remarkable as it is seemingly impossible.

Abraham knew that God was at work in his life, yet he remained unsure how that manifested itself in his life. For a second time, he told a powerful leader that Sarah was his sister in an attempt to save his life. He could not imagine that there was any fear of God in the land (20:11). The unintended consequence was that the king and the people of the region faced God's judgment for how they treated Sarah as a result.

God had been at work in Abraham. What Abraham did not know is that God was known by King Abimelech as well. The king listened to God. He spoke with Him, and he trusted Him. God had revealed himself to Abimelech, and Abimelech did not want to sin against Him. Abraham had a fellow worshiper but did not know it because he did not trust God enough or speak of Him to the king. Later, they were able to discuss difficult matters more civilly because they knew God was in control of their lives (21:22-34). God's people miss out on innumerable blessings when they fail to celebrate His goodness and power.

Learning to trust God more than his circumstances, Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac in order to be faithful. God provided a substitute and affirmed Abraham's faith (22:1-19). Thank God today for being more holy and powerful than imaginable. Pray for faith that He will provide.

Monday, January 6, 2020—Genesis 16-19

God created marriage and the family to display His character and His blessing in so many ways. To corrupt them, therefore, is one of the primary strategies of the enemy.

God made a promise that Abram and Sarai would have a family. Sarai must have developed some concern, worry, doubt, or anxiety that they didn't hear God correctly or that God needed a little help in fulfilling His promise. Sarai offered her servant Hagar to Abram so she could have a child for him (16:2). It did not go well.

Despite the doubt, God was gracious to Hagar, and He fulfilled His promise to Abram. He changed his name to Abraham (17:5). He was no longer "exalted father" but "the father of many." God saw Abraham as he would be, not as he was. God expected Abraham to live up to this vision—to keep the covenant and lead his family in faithfulness.

In a stunning scene, the Lord himself comes to Abraham to affirm the covenant and to tell him of his son's coming birth. He also reveals a plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and allows Abraham to plead for the righteous in the cities (18:1-33). The angels then go to Lot and warn him to leave the city before God destroys it. They leave, but his wife dies, and his daughters do the unthinkable because they lack faith (19:30-38).

Thank God for His faithfulness and ability to work despite our weaknesses. Pray for marriages and families to honor God faithfully.

Sunday, January 5, 2020—Genesis 12-15

Just as God used six days to create the world, He used a process to call to Himself a people who would be His very own. That process began with one man, Abram. God called him to leave his country, people, and home—all the things that gave him identity and protection—and to walk by faith into the unknown. This is the call He still gives to those who follow.

God had called Abram to be a blessing and promised to protect him (12:2-3). When he went to Egypt, he feared for his life, so he told a lie to the Pharaoh. While Abram prospered, Pharaoh suffered. This was not the life of faith and blessing God had intended. Nonetheless, Abram continued to call on the name of the Lord, and the Lord continued to guide him. God calls His people to faithfulness and growth, not perfection.

Abram's nephew found himself living in a war zone, and he was taken prisoner. Abram and his men rescued Lot, and then Abram had a fellowship meal with Melchizedek, the priest of Salem, and gave him a tenth of everything (14:20). From the beginning, worship included bread, wine, and a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

After this, God made a promise to Abram to give him a son and a vast land as his possession. First, the sin of the Amorites would have to reach its full measure (15:16). God was working a process Abram would have to trust. Pray for faith to trust God's working in your life today.

Saturday, January 4, 2020—Genesis 10-11

God is a god of renewal. He had brought judgment on the earth not to destroy it but to cleanse it. He wanted people to live by His design for worship and flourishing, so after the flood, He charged Noah and his sons with a similar command as He had given in the beginning—be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (compare Genesis 1:21 and 9:1). God wanted His image-bearers to cover, steward, and enjoy all of His creation.

The genealogy of Genesis 10 contains dozens of names that are hard to pronounce and unknown to most modern readers. Those names, however, represent the worship and obedience of Noah and his sons. They did exactly what God commanded. They had children. They moved to a variety of places. They developed a variety of skills and abilities like farming, hunting, and maritime activity. Shem, Ham, and Japheth multiplied into a vast multitude of clans, languages, territories, and nations.

Sin continued to crouch at the door, however. As humanity developed, some decided they wanted to build a tower to honor themselves and no longer be scattered over the earth (11:4). Rather than worshiping God by remaining scattered, they wanted to gather together. God saw the devastation that would come from a people focused on worshiping themselves rather than worshiping Him, so He confused their languages and scattered them as intended. Their disobedience brought confusion.

Thank God for being able to work despite your rebellious tendencies. Pray for a heart that joyfully worships and obeys.

Friday, January 3, 2020—Genesis 6-9

Referees enforce rules. Parents establish discipline. Likewise, God gave Adam and Eve boundaries—not to limit them but to enable them to enjoy life in the Garden. Going beyond the boundaries was sin.

That sin affected the whole earth. As the population grew, those on earth were

going beyond their God-given boundaries, and evil was in their hearts all the time (6:5). God had a plan to remove the evil from the earth, but Noah found favor. Unlike the rest, he was righteous (6:6-9).

Noah had walked in the expectations God had for him, so God told him to build an ark to carry him through the coming judgment. Noah had no idea what God was going to do, but he obeyed. For 100 years, Noah prepared, and he took on board his family along with pairs of unclean animals and seven pairs of clean animals and food. God was giving him instruction for surviving the flood and thriving afterward.

“But God remembered Noah,” (8:1). This judgment process was long and uncomfortable, but God had not forgotten them. When they came off the ark, Noah sacrificed some of the clean animals as an act of worship. God had given them in advance what they needed to honor Him. Then, God made a covenant that He would never judge the earth by water again.

Thank God for the rainbow that reminds us of His demands for righteousness and His promise to judge in a different way. Thank Him for Jesus, the Righteous One, who took on the unrighteousness of us all.

Thursday, January 2, 2020—Genesis 3-5

For most people, talking animals are not ordinary. They are the stuff of Dr. Dolittle and other fiction. For Adam and Eve, a talking serpent was not remarkable. What was remarkable was the content of his conversation. He convinced Eve that God was not trustworthy—that He was holding them back. As a result, they both ate the forbidden fruit. They thought they would gain wisdom—knowing good and evil (3:5). In reality, they already knew that. Now, what they knew was shame.

God had given them wisdom by giving them responsibility and choice. Satan had driven a wedge between God and man. Satan promised gain. He delivered loss. Adam and Eve made clothing, but God provided something more sacrificial and permanent to cover their shame, and He promised to one day destroy the enemy who had brought this curse (3:15).

Sin was now crouching at the door (4:7), waiting to pounce on the hearts and minds of people. Cain grew angry rather than repentant when God did not accept his sacrifice, so he killed his brother rather than killing his pride. Like his parents, he felt separation from the presence of God (4:14), and he could not handle the weight of that consequence. In mercy, God provided a promise of vengeance on any attacker.

While the population increased, anger grew as well (4:24), yet men began to call on the name of the Lord (4:26). Pray that the chaos of life will not keep you from calling on the Lord as God has designed you to do.

Wednesday, January 1, 2020—Genesis 1-2

“In the beginning . . .” The writer knows life had a starting point, and he knows God was already there (1:1). This Creator, who is the culmination of all powers, is the One who spoke everything into existence. He is a Creator with method—bringing things into being on the first three days which He developed further in next three days. He is a Creator with intention—wanting everything He makes to prosper in its goodness.

Above all, He is a Creator with a name—two, in fact. In Genesis 1, He is God—

transcendent, all-powerful, fully pleased with all He had made (1:31). In Genesis 2, He is LORD God—imminent, personal, relating to His creatures. God formed life from the dust, but He only breathed His breath of life into man (1:27, 2:7). He made the garden with the express intention that the one He made in His image would then tend His masterpiece (2:15).

In giving him a task, God also gave him great blessing. He had abundant food, and he had the ability to make choices. He had work that gave him purpose and fulfillment. Then, God blessed him with a helper—a woman with traits and skills he did not possess who would help him fulfill his God-given calling. They glorified God through their worship and obedience and enjoyed one another in their God-given design.

On this first day of the year, praise God for being powerful, personal, and intentional. Pray for a life that glorifies and enjoys Him.