



Sunday, September 7, 2025

Conclusion

Over the course of the summer we've been walking through Genesis 1-11, where we were able to see that this Scripture lays the foundation for the entire Bible. Some even reference this section as the front porch of Scripture as it introduces us to who God is, who we are, what's gone wrong, and ultimately where hope is found.

So, to give you a brief overview, we began in Genesis 1-2, where God spoke the universe into being. Out of nothing, He brought order and beauty and life. And at the very height of creation, He then formed humanity in His image - male and female - designed to reflect His glory, to steward His creation, and to live in fellowship with Him. It was absolutely perfect and beautiful.

But by Genesis 3, things are not as they seem and the story now takes a drastic turn. Adam and Eve fall into the temptation to be like God, and sin now enters the world, bringing shame, separation and consequence. God has mercy upon them and Adam and Eve are removed from the Garden and forced to live outside as they forge a life of brokenness and toil. And yet, even in the midst of judgment, God speaks a promise - that one day the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. Right there in the garden, in humanity's darkest moment, God points forward to redemption showing us that He always has a plan.

From there, the story unfolds as we wait for that promise to begin to take shape. In Genesis 4 however, sin is escalating and gaining momentum. Cain kills Abel, and humanity continues its downward spiral. So, with Abel dead and Cain wandering in rebellion, God, in His great mercy provides another son to Adam and Eve, named Seth. And it's through Seth that we get a godly line - people who call on the name of the Lord. That thread of hope, fragile as it may seem, is still alive. And it keeps moving forward... all the way to Noah.

This is important, because God already knew judgment was coming in Genesis 6-9. Humanity's wickedness had filled the earth, but God - in His faithfulness - preserved a remnant through Noah

and his family. He made sure His purposes would continue. And when the waters receded, God established His covenant by setting the rainbow in the sky as a sign of that promise, and He renewed His call to humanity.

But even Noah - the righteous man who walked with God - fell into sin and shame. You see, the flood could wash the earth clean, but it couldn't wash the sin out of the human heart. So when Noah and his family stepped off the ark so too did their sinful nature.

And just last week, as we came to Genesis 10-11, we saw just how deep that sinful nature still ran as we walked through the story of the Tower of Babel. Instead of filling the earth as God had commanded, the people gathered to build a tower. They said, 'Let us make a name for ourselves,' instead of making the name of the Lord great. It was pride. Rebellion. Arrogance. And yet, instead of wiping them out like He did in the flood, God again showed mercy. He confused their language instead and scattered them across the earth.

Babel becomes this picture of human arrogance and rebellion, and a reminder that anything built apart from God will never last. The nations were now scattered, divided, confused. But God - in His sovereignty - wasn't fazed by any of it. His plan was just starting to pick up speed.

Which now brings us right into Genesis 12 where God calls a man named Abram. That promise to Eve - the one that passed through Seth, through Noah, through Shem - now comes to Abram. And through Abram, God now begins to put His covenant plan in motion by promising that he would be the father of nations as numerous as the stars in the skies. And that through his lineage would one day come Jesus Christ - the One who would finally and fully break the curse of sin and death.

And this is where the story takes a turn. Up until now, Genesis has been giving us the big picture - creation, the fall, the flood, the nations. It's all been at this wide, sweeping, macro level. But now, starting in chapter 12, the camera zooms in on one man and one family, through whom God will begin unfolding His covenant plan.

But here's the thing - when God first calls Abram, he's already 75 years old. And his wife Sarai? She's barren. They've never been able to have children. So right from the beginning, the whole story of God's covenant starts in a place that looks impossible.

Fast forward 10 years. Ten years of waiting. Ten years of wondering. Ten years of watching the calendar turn - and still no child. Abram is now 85, Sarai is 75. And you can feel the tension: time is

running out. Hope is quickly fading.

Genesis 16 puts it like this:

Genesis 16:1-4a

‘Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived.’

You see what’s happening? After 10 years of waiting and waiting, Abram and Sarai start to question God’s plan. Not His power necessarily, but the plan. And then, because things aren’t moving forward the way that they had originally thought, they begin to doubt themselves. Maybe they’d misunderstood. Maybe they’d missed a step. Maybe they weren’t supposed to wait for Sarai.

So at some point, they start to consider that maybe they’re supposed to help God out. Yes, that must be it! So ‘naturally,’ they decide Abram will have a child with Hagar, Sarai’s maidservant. And sure enough, she conceives. But this decision will ultimately bring conflict and complication into their home, and into history - something that they never could have imagined.

The Bible doesn’t really go into detail on exactly how that decision was made but over the last little while I have found myself trying to imagine what that conversation would have looked like.

Because Sarai was the one who first suggested the plan, I get the impression she must have felt the weight of this promise in a unique way. After-all, she was the one who was barren. She was the one who couldn’t produce a child. It was going to take a miracle - and she knew it.

But that miracle hadn’t come yet. Ten years had passed. Ten years of waiting. Ten years of hoping. And she was getting older... well past child-bearing years. And I wonder - did Sarai just get tired of waiting? Did she lose hope? Did she start to believe that perhaps, she was the ‘problem,’ instead of the ‘miraculous vessel’ God had chosen to fulfill His covenant through?

So in her desperation, Sarai finally comes to Abram with a plan. She says, in effect, ‘Maybe God needs a little help on this one. If I can’t give you a child, then maybe my maidservant Hagar can.’

And here's the thing - it's easy to view Sarai as the problem here but I think the real problem is that her husband went along with it. He said yes. And I can't help but wonder - what on earth was going through his mind? This is the same Abram who heard the voice of God. The same man who packed up everything he owned and followed the Lord into the unknown. The same man who built altars and worshiped and trusted God's word. And now, when Sarai suggests something completely outside of God's design, he doesn't resist, he doesn't question her...Scripture doesn't even indicate that he prayed - he just says... 'Ok.'

How does that happen? How does a man of faith - a man who has seen God's power firsthand - suddenly cave so easily?

And it's not the first time we've seen this, is it? Back in the Garden, Adam knew better than to eat the forbidden fruit, but in his weakness, he went along with Eve and as a result put the world in a mess of trouble. And I think somewhere deep down, embedded in every one of us, is this desire - this need - to take control. But that control is not ours to take. It needs to be yielded to the Lord, the only One who ultimately has all control.

This whole story is like a snapshot of Eden. And it's a reminder to flee the desires of the flesh, and to cling to God's plan, even when it feels impossible to wait.

Because, now instead of birthing a promise, they birthed a problem.

Which is incredibly unfortunate because the decision to meddle with God's plan that day would change the course of history for generations upon generations upon generations - even to this day.

As a result of Abram and Sarai's impatience, Ishmael was conceived and born. And yes, later God was still faithful to His promise by giving Sarai a son - Isaac - but the damage of their disobedience had already been done. The covenant was always meant to come through God's miracle, not through human effort. Through Isaac came the line of the Messiah. Through Ishmael came the line of the flesh. History tells us that Islam traces its spiritual heritage back to Ishmael through Muhammad, while through Isaac's line came the Israelites - and ultimately Jesus Christ, the true Messiah. And so, the fallout of those two lines has created conflict and tension that has echoed through history, even into our world today.

Paul picks up on this in Galatians 4. He says:

Galatians 4:22-26

‘For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all...’

This is important because here, Paul reminds us that the real tension isn't with the individuals - Sarai and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael - as much as with what they represent. Hagar represents human effort. Sarai represents God's promise. Hagar points to the law - what we try to do on our own. Sarai points to the gospel - what only God can do.

And that's exactly what Abram and Sarai missed. They grabbed the reins and tried to control what was only God's to control. And every time we do the same - when we rush ahead, when we try to force it, when we try to help God out - we don't become a help. We become a hindrance.

Example: back many moons ago when Jordan and I were dating, I was over at her house and she was cleaning up her bedroom and I wanted to lend a helping hand. She said it wasn't necessary, but I decided to help anyways and somewhere through the course of cleaning, I bumped a dresser and a special glass bowl that her grandmother had given her fell to the floor and broke. I had effectively become a hinderance instead of a help.

And that's exactly what Abram and Sarai did with Hagar. They thought they were helping God out. But in reality, they only got in the way.

Now, here's the thing - in Abram's culture, taking another wife wasn't necessarily viewed as sin. But by taking Hagar as his wife it was clearly an act of unbelief in what God had promised them. In fact, I would say it was even more than that. It was the same temptation Adam and Eve faced in the Garden - to be like God, to take control, to force what only God can do. Unbelief says, 'God may not come through.' Pride says, 'So I'll step in.'

Ten years earlier, Abram believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. But here we are a decade later, and now he's acting in unbelief and pride. What happened in those years? Something shifted in his heart.

It's one thing to wrestle with unbelief - we all go through that. But it's another thing to move from wrestling with unbelief to acting in disobedience. That's a heart shift. Wrestling with unbelief is human. Acting out in disobedience is sin.

There's a passage in Mark 9 where the disciples are healing the sick and casting out demons. A father shows up with his demon-possessed son but the disciples are unable to heal or deliver the boy. Shortly afterwards, that father makes his way to where Jesus is and in the middle of the crowd, he calls out to Jesus and desperately pleads for Him to heal his son. To which Jesus responds in:

Mark 9:23-24

'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

This is probably one of the most real and genuine responses of faith that I have seen in the Gospels. It shows the desperate state of the man - listening to the instruction of Jesus and knowing that he's barely keeping it together, barely hanging on by a thread and instead of putting on a brave face, he shares his struggle with Jesus and asks Him to help him with His unbelief. Jesus doesn't chastise him, berate him or demean him. He listens. Because that's exactly what He does.

Points to Consider:

God's covenant always starts in places that look impossible. Here's the thing - when God first calls Abram, he's already seventy-five years old. And his wife Sarai? She's barren. They've never had children. So right from the beginning, the whole story of God's covenant starts in a place that looks impossible. And that's exactly the point. God doesn't choose the strongest, the youngest, or the most likely. He chooses Abram and Sarai - a couple who, by all human standards, couldn't possibly carry this promise forward. Why? Because this covenant was never going to rest on human ability. It was always going to rest on God's power and God's faithfulness. And the same is true in your life - the places that feel impossible are often the very places God chooses to show His glory.

Don't let your unbelief move into disobedience. Listen, it's human to wrestle with unbelief. We all do. But the danger comes when unbelief moves from a private struggle into public disobedience. Abram and Sarai didn't bring their unbelief to God - they acted on it. And it cost them dearly. But you don't have to make that same mistake. Mark 9 reminds us of the father who said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." That's honesty. That's vulnerability. And Jesus didn't reject him for it - He listened, and He answered. Don't put on a brave face with God. Be real with Him. Bring Him your doubts, your struggles, your questions. Because He already knows. And when you bring it to Him, He has the power to meet you there and strengthen your faith.

God's promises are fulfilled in His timing, by His Spirit - not in our flesh. Abram and Sarai thought they had to help God out. That's why Ishmael was born. But Ishmael represented the flesh - human effort. Isaac represented the promise - God's Spirit at work. Paul picks this up in Galatians and says the same thing about salvation: it's not what we do for God, it's what God has already done for us in Christ. And the same truth applies to every promise of God in our lives. You can strive in your own strength and try to force it in the flesh, but it will always fail. Or, you can trust and wait for God to do it by His Spirit - and He will do what only He can do. In His good and perfect time.

Blessing

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you
May He cause His face to Shine upon you
May He be gracious towards you
Lift up His countenance upon you
And may He give you peace
In Jesus name, Amen.

Pastor Josh Hageman
Lead Pastor
Kingsview Community Church
Stoney Creek, ON
www.kingsviewchurch.com
<https://www.facebook.com/KingsviewCommunityChurch/>