

Reviewing God's Multi-Ethnic Family Plan – Genesis 12-16

The book of Genesis is my favorite book of the Bible. Last year I may have said Ephesians is my favorite book, but this year Genesis is my favorite book. I sometimes say whatever book of the Bible I'm studying is my favorite, but I've especially loved Genesis for many years. I've read more on it than others and taught more on it than others because it's so foundational to everything. I can't get enough of this book. I can't stay away from this book of Genesis. I've preached different books but I keep coming back to Genesis.

- In 2007 I preached 20 messages on Genesis 1-3 Sunday mornings as my first detailed verse-by-verse chapter-by-chapter study here to set the foundation as a new pastor along with the attributes of God
- In 2008 I came back to Genesis on Sunday evenings, Genesis 3-6, to start a 10-part series on "Family Foundations" in those chapters
- 2009 I returned to Gen 6-9 for 8-part series on science and Bible
- In 2011 I came back to Genesis 9-12 to teach a 5-part series on God's Family Plan to bless all ethnicities and nations through Israel
- 2012 I started a series called the "Life of Faith" starting in Gen 12 in a number of messages on Sunday nights last year. We left off in Gen. 16 on how if our life/family is messed up, God is still faithful.

I can't get away from Genesis and we can't get enough of Genesis, but if I kept a slow pace of preaching it in the rotation of Sunday evenings once a month or less (as different men share the Sunday PM pulpit), I may never finish! So we'll be turning our attention to this book for our next Sunday AM series and I'm excited to do so. It's good to alternate NT and OT to deepen our grasp of Scripture.

The audio and notes of past studies are on our Sermon Audio page but what I want to do before I pick up where we left off is 1 more review message on chapters 12-16 before we resume in chapter 17. 2 weeks ago we saw how we see Jesus in Genesis (chapters 1-3), and last week how the name of the Lord drives everything (4-12).

Gen 12:1 *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* [repeated with his seed/descendants" in 22:18]

This is a massively important passage and promise that drives the rest of the OT and rest of history. Please don't miss what's going on here. It's impossible to make too much of how big this passage is in redemptive history. It may be the OT most significant turning point. It's the hinge the whole Bible turns on, swinging open the door of the plan of the gospel. In the context, Gen 1-11 show us God's creation, its corruption caused by sin, the catastrophe God brings on this sinful world in the flood, the confusion and division of humanity at the Tower of Babel into various ethnic groups, and all of these themes point us to another "C" that is needed, "Christ," Christ through His covenant grace and later His coming to fulfill it

Christ is needed as the Redeemer of all that went wrong in Gen 1-11. Christ will reunite in Himself every ethnicity in unity in His family, not just after the cross or at the last "C" (the consummation at the end of history). Christ is working to do that in Genesis right after and on the heels of the confusion and division of Babel a few verses earlier in chapter 11. At Babel, the languages were divided. At Pentecost, all the languages hear the gospel and nations come back together in Christ. But we don't wait till Acts 2 for Christ to begin to reverse mankind's division that happened at the tower of Babel; it starts in the chapter right after Babel, here in Genesis 12! Not just a prophecy of Gentile blessing in Christ, the *process starts*

The word "nation" at the end of v. 2 in the Greek translation of the OT was the word *ethne* – the word we get ethnic or ethnicity from, used in the Bible for Gentiles, non-Jewish nations or ethnic groups. God would make of Abram a nation for the sake of all the nations. Look at the end of v. 3, it says 'in you all the *ethne* of the earth will be blessed.' In Abram's family tree, every ethnicity, every nation was to be blessed, and that begins in Genesis as we'll see today. It is still God's plan when a later descendant of Abram named Jesus says to fellow Jewish descendants *make disciples of all the ethne*.

You need to understand Matthew 28:19 was not a new revelation or a new plan of God for Jewish descendants of Abraham to bring gospel blessings to all nations. God reveals that first in Gen 12:3. Some have even called Gen 12:3 the Great Commission of the OT. I like to also call it God's multi-ethnic family plan. The "blessing" in v. 2 came *to the Jews* to flow *through the Jews* as the end of v. 2 says, "so that you shall be a blessing." In other words, He blessed them *to bless others*. What type of blessing? Acts 3:25-26 says the blessing is salvation upon repentance, all nations blessed with them

Turn to Galatians 3 for just a moment to see what Paul said about Genesis promises to bless all nations through Abram and his seed. Abram, later named Abraham, was saved by faith alone, Gen 15:6. Galatians 3:6 quotes Genesis 15:6 to say the blessing of Abraham, and the seed or the sons of Abraham, is not limited to ethnic Jews.

Gal 3:6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. [Gen 15:6] ⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles [Grk word ethnos] by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS [ethnos] WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Paul quotes Genesis 12:3 and calls that the gospel in advance. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is called "the first gospel" and Gen 12:3 is an advancement of the gospel, the good news preached to Abram that the blessing of salvation was not just for Israel, but all nations.

... ¹⁴ in order that **in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles** [ethnos—each time same word as Genesis 12]

... ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. [the ultimate seed or son of Abraham Gen 12:3 points to is Christ, the greatest offspring or descendant from Abraham's family to bless all families of earth]

God's family plan was never about just one nation. It was always a plan for all nations of the earth to be blessed through that nation, through the Messiah and His gospel to the Jews first, and *through the Jews* also to the Gentiles. God's covenant grace from the start was not just for ethnic Jews but for every ethnic group, and that's why He chose Israel to be a light to the nations, as Isaiah taught. Paul rebukes the Jewish 'Judaizers' by reminding them of this:

... ²⁸ ***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants [seed/sons], heirs according to promise.***

Father Abraham has many sons, many sons has father Abraham, I am one of them, and so are you, if Jesus is your Lord (right hand...)

And in Galatians 6:10 it uses the language of a household of faith, a family of faith we're in, a family of all nations, every ethnos. If you turn forward just a few pages to Ephesians 2, the division and racism of humanity since Gen. 11 (tower of Babel) finally meets the one who fulfills the promises to Abraham beginning in Gen 12, and this Jesus brings together ethnic groups once at enmity with each other, and His cross replaces hostility with unity as a family.

Eph 2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* ¹⁴ *For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,* ¹⁵ *by abolishing in His flesh the enmity ...* ¹⁶ *and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity ...*
 ... ¹⁹ *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, **and are of God's household** ...*

[in His house, not just as fellow citizens, but as fellow sons!!]

That's family language. And so is Eph 3:6 where it says Gentiles are "fellow heirs" (that's language of sons in a family). We're all fellow family members and sharers of the promise through the gospel, it says. And Eph 3:15 I think speaks of God's multi-ethnic family, some of which is on earth, and some of which is in heaven, where every tribe and tongue and people and nation worship Him.

[Shep Conf. preview singing 'elect from every nation, yet one...']

You can turn back to Genesis 12, but we could trace that theme in the gospels and book of Acts and all the way to that scene in the book of Revelation where God's multi-national multi-colored multi-cultural multi-ethnic family plan culminates and celebrates the Lamb who was slain to redeem from every tribe and tongue. It is in some ways the theme of redemptive history, and that would be a great study in the NT, but today I want see this in the OT itself how God has always been saving and making a multi-ethnic family

End of Genesis 12:3b *'...in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.* ⁴ *So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.* ⁵ *Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran ...*

Before they get to the Promised Land, promised blessing through and in Abram to other nations begins to develop *on the way there*.

It says in v. 5 there were “*persons they acquired in Haran*” – the footnote of my Bible says “*literally souls.*” The ancient rabbis understood this unusual Hebrew expression as meaning *acquired souls, souls won to Abram’s family of faith, not just their bodies, but their souls were joined in the spiritual blessings with Abram.*

However these outsiders came into his household, Abram is being a blessing to them spiritually, as v. 2 said. End of v. 3 said nations were to be blessed in and through Abram’s family, and the process seems to be starting as soon as 2 verses later on the way to Canaan.

In the end of v. 8, when it says Abram “called on the name of the Lord,” we saw last week that phrase refers to proclaiming the name of the Lord, like Elijah did on Mt. Carmel, to call on and proclaim the name of Yahweh as superior to the false gods of other nations. This is public worship¹ and this was a testimony before the nations, which he understood rightly was part of his calling from v. 1-3, as we saw last week, to proclaim God's fame and name to all peoples.

One writer explained it this way: ‘Abram publically proclaimed the name of the Lord ... He proclaimed his faith. Luther translated this “preached” [in v. 8b] ... this was a very public event. The locals knew what was happening ... Abram spent his time making God famous in Canaan ... He believed the *global promises* that his offspring would mediate the blessing ... that all the world would be blessed through his life ... he proclaimed the name of the Lord. Indeed, the gospel was announced in advance in Abram’² [Gal 3:8]

Not only announced, it advances in Gen 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, etc., as we'll see. God’s gospel plan unfolds, enfolds Gentiles right in Gen 12, and in chapter 13, verse 4, he continues his public worship and witness calling on/proclaiming God’s name. And he builds altars in Mamre (13:18b), worshipping God by the covenant name Yahweh. How effective was his witness in Mamre? In Genesis 14:13 some men in Mamre form a covenant relationship with Abram as allies. The NASB footnote says the end of 14:13 “allies” is “literally, *possessors of the covenant* with Abram.” It’s a covenantal alliance, and Jewish commentators say this can mean converts to the faith.³

At the least we can see Abram’s witness and reputation growing, with these men and kings, but his witness started in his own home, and his household had grown, as 14:14 says, to include 318 men who had been born in his household and raised by ‘father Abram.’

There were many non-Jews in his house, Gen 15:2 also alludes. Interesting note in 14:14 – the men born and “trained” in Abram’s household is the Heb. root word in Prov. 22:6 “*train up a child...*” It can have the idea of discipleship and training. It’s a rare word, not used anywhere else in OT, but it includes *spiritual* training.

Abram was blessing these 318 non-Jewish men by passing on his faith. And in chapter 14, his witness is already extending beyond his home and his allies, as it’s clear in 14:19 that word is getting around that Abram worships God Most High. Even the King of Salem comes to meet up with Abram and to worship with him. It’s clear in 14:20 that this Gentile king Melchizedek is a true believer in the Lord and is blessed with Abram in fulfillment of Gen 12:3.

How did Melchizedek become a worshipper of the true God? We aren’t told, but we need to keep in mind the OT is not the story of Jews as God’s people and then the NT is the story of Gentiles also becoming God’s people. From the beginning, non-Jews have been part of the people of the Most High God, worshippers like this man Melchizedek. God was saving a multitude of non-Jews for over 2,000 years before Abram was born, and the very reason He called Abram was to bless the rest of the nations with the gospel. See, the Gentile church in NT times was not Plan B after Jews rejected their Messiah; Paul’s missionary journeys *are the Plan A* of Gen 12:3! And Melchizedek here is *Exhibit A* of God’s Gentile worshippers.

And there’s another Gentile living in this same timeframe who is a worshipper of the true God and is even greater than both these men *There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job...that man was the **greatest** of all the men of the east...The LORD said to Satan, “...there is no one like [Job] on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”* (Job 1:1, 4, 8)

Apart from Abram and independent of Abram and prior to Abram, God was worshipped in OT times by God’s multi-ethnic family. It included people outside Abram’s family tress, and also people in Abram’s household who were not ethnically related to Abram/Jews

What about the next chapter, Genesis 15? Look at Genesis 15:6. It says in the NKJV that Abram “*believed in the LORD, and He [the LORD] accounted it to him [Abram] for righteousness.*” That’s the imputing of the Lord’s righteousness in justification by faith alone. That’s what Paul quotes to prove Gentile salvation (Rom 4, Gal 3).

But we don't have to skip ahead to the NT to see it. In Genesis 15, even in this chapter with land promises to the nation of Israel, the nations named in v. 19-21 also receive saving grace in the OT. Even pagan nations God curses and uses Israel to conquer, God has saving grace for and allows some from each to join Israel's family! Verse 19 mentions first "Kenites." Kenites according to Judges 1:16 became part of the family of faith by Moses' marriage. And other Kenites were married into the family of faith. Judges 5:24 celebrates "*Most blessed of women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Most blessed is she of women ...*" (The song of Deborah)

Next people in v. 19 is the "Kenizzites." Remember Joshua and Caleb were the 2 faithful men when Israel first entered the land. Joshua 14:14 says the land of "*Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully.*" Caleb is from a Kenizzite Gentile home, yet he follows the Lord and inherits promised land. Even the land promise of Genesis 15 was not just for ethnic Jews, and Ezekiel 47 affirms land inheritance for non-Jewish believers.

"Kadmonites" in v. 19 aren't mentioned elsewhere by that name, but the term literally is rendered "men of the east," and we read in the same timeframe as Abraham of the greatest of the men of the east who is a true believer in the same God of Abraham, Job 1:3. Next are "Hittites" in v. 20. Do we know any Hittites who were part of the family of the faithful later in Israel's history? Uriah. In the story with David and Bathsheba, her husband Uriah the Hittite faithfully followed the Lord more than any Israelite in the narrative

When it mentions "Canaanites" in v. 21, can we think of any who later enter the family of faith and the Promised Land with Israel? Remember the shady lady from Jericho? Rahab and her family become part of Israel by marriage, making her inherit land as well. The "Jebusites" were in Salem, home of Melchizedek the believer. Even the very nations God would later conquer for their sin, are in the multi-ethnic family plan of a God who redeems of every tribe.

In Gen 16, God extended His special grace to Hagar the Egyptian. In the end of Gen 16:11, the Lord tells her He has heard her in her affliction. She becomes one of a few in OT to visibly see the Lord, (and amazed in v. 13 she's still alive). Hagar, a Gentile in Abram's house has a privilege few of Abram's physical descendants did in OT. Hagar sees the Lord, and is blessed in Abram despite his sin.

The plan of grace for Gentiles doesn't stop when Jews are in sin. God shows His love to Hagar and gives her a grace greater than sin

16:7 Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water ...
 ... ¹⁰ Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."
¹¹ The angel of the LORD said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name **Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.**

Ishmael='God hears and responds' (yes, even to afflicted Gentiles).
¹³ Then she called the name of **the LORD who spoke to her**, "**You are a God who sees**"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after **seeing Him?**" [ESV alternate "who looks after me"]

Notice it wasn't a mere angel (the Hebrew is "messenger"), v. 13 says it was the Lord. She calls Him God and He doesn't correct her so this is The Messenger, it's the Lord, 2nd person of the Trinity. Based on John 1:18 you could say Hagar got to see Christ. Nobody since Adam and Eve's sins, as far as we know, has seen the Lord in bodily form, but here this Gentile lady from the continent of Africa gets to see the Lord, the very Lord who sees her and her sin and yet seeks her in His grace, and gives her a son with a name to remind her the rest of her life God hears and cares for His afflicted people.

16:14 mentions a well where she realized she's talking to the Lord. 'In this gracious encounter by the well, we are reminded of another woman who met the Lord beside a well, the woman of Samaria (John 4) [also a foreigner the Lord revealed Himself to]. She too found that the Lord saw right through her, even to the depths of her sin, yet was still seeking to turn her into a true worshiper.'⁴

Again a non-Jewish woman is the first to physically see the Lord, before even father Abraham sees the Lord in Gen. 18, before his descendants in the NT saw the Lord Jesus as the God who seeks. Hagar after meeting and believing in this Lord later goes back to the continent we call Africa today, and in the book of Acts, another person sees Christ in the OT (a man from Ethiopia reading Isaiah 53 who Philip shows Christ to in the OT) and he believes in Jesus and joins God's multi-ethnic family on his way down to Africa, too

Red, brown, yellow, black, white, have always been precious in the sight of Jesus who loves all the children of the world in His family.

It's not the NT that starts bringing Gentiles into the fold. God has been saving non-Jews since Gen 3 for 2,000 years before Abraham and as He makes Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people it's so He can be father of a multitude of believing non-Jews in the OT. Not just males, but females, not just Jews, but Gentiles, not just freemen, but slaves as well, all who believed in Abraham's God:

Gal. 3:28 says "***neither Jew nor Greek ... neither slave nor free man ... neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ ...***"²⁹ *And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.* [Hallelujah! Amen?!]

Paul is rebuking the Judaizers in Galatians, supposed experts in the Torah, but if they'd only read the opening chapters of the Torah as God intended, they'd see from the start, from Father Abraham, the family included Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free.

If you look at Gen 48, God's multi-ethnic family plan is enfolding Africans. Abram's grandson Jacob blesses his son Joseph's union in marriage to Asenath, a wife from the land of On in Africa, part of the ancient kingdom of Misrayim, in the NE African continent. Jacob blesses their 2 African born sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, treating them as his firstborns (48:5). Jacob adopts these sons of the African Asenath into the family of Israel, giving them not only an inheritance with the 12 sons of Israel but making them part of the Tribes of Israel. Israel's tribes had African blood from the start.

48:9 *Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them"*²⁰ ***He blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'"*** [These African-born sons become the prototype of blessing for Israelites to be blessed in years to come!]

Ben and Ashley are adopting a little boy from the same continent and his birth name is Ephraim (his new first name is Solomon) and you can pray for them that the final adoption order will go through in Ghana and that God will provide financially and logistically the remaining details so they can bring their son into their family soon. The adoption of Ephraim into the multi-ethnic family of God, even Ephraim becoming a full-fledged tribe in full inheritance with the 12 sons of Jacob, it's a wonderful picture of us Gentiles who share as heirs all family covenant blessings with the 12 tribes of Israel. Earthly cross-ethnic adoption is a picture of God's gospel family.

Abram's firstborn son marries an African and Abram's grandson Jacob adopts these 2 African-born sons and moves to the continent of Africa at God's command. All Abram's descendants live in NE Africa for over 400 years where they had many interactions with other African peoples, and some came to faith and worshipped in the first Passover with Israel and also left with Israel in the Exodus

Exodus 12:38 tells us with the Israelites leaving Egypt to worship the Lord, there was "a mixed multitude also," a multi-ethnic mix of people, God-fearing Egyptians (Ex 9:20) and others. We know the mixed multitude include black Africans from Cush (what is called modern Sudan). In Numbers 12, presumably after Moses' first wife dies, he marries a black Cushite, and when Miriam opposes Moses' marriage, God strikes her white as snow with leprosy in judgment.

SLIDES OF CUSHITES HERE?

Moses himself had been adopted by an African princess of Egypt, and a non-Jewish mixed multitude joined God's family by marriage

1. One of Israel's priests, whose name can mean "the Negro" or "the Nubian" is celebrated alongside Moses as one of Israel's 2 great intercessors during the wilderness wandering, and this man is the only other person in the OT besides Abraham who it speaks of God's righteousness reckoned to, using the same phrase of Abraham's covenant grace. The book of Numbers says this priest received an everlasting covenant from Yahweh
2. One of Israel's greatest kings history marries a woman who describes her skin to the Jews as "black/dark," in a marriage passage celebrated for all time by the inspiration of God
3. Cushite Africans had close, friendly relations with Hezekiah, king of Judah, and fought to defend Judah against Assyria
4. King David has one of his black soldiers tell him the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan in battle, and a number of the men in King David's army were believers from other nations
5. Jeremiah wrote "*can the Cushite change his skin...?*" possibly thinking of the dark-skinned Cushite who helped him out of a well, an African with true faith in God when few in Israel did
6. The nations of Africa by name are mentioned and prophesied to become recipients of salvation, which began in OT times and is promised in even greater measure before the end of time
7. The land of Cush in black Africa appears in the OT about as many times in the OT as the land of Canaan in the Pentateuch, which is where Canaan's land is repeatedly promised to Israel, but many have never heard of Cush or God's plan for that land
8. God tells Amos He loves black Cushites the same as the Jews

9. A believer from Cyrene in Africa helps Jesus carry His cross
 10. In the place where believers were first called Christians, one of the first church leaders is a man nicknamed “*black*” in Latin

If you want to study those further, you can go back and listen to the message on "God's Heart for Africa" (another sermon for Arabs that God saved in Bible times) but we need to see God's family has more color than we typically see in children's Bibles and artwork.

SLIDES FROM MESSAGE 61 HERE?

There's a lot of Arabs saved in OT times and many different shades of brown that God saved in OT times and even us lighter skinned people He began to save and had a plan to save from the beginning

In the original Exodus, there was a mixed multitude from Africa and perhaps some middle-eastern countries, and the first Passover gave instructions for how foreigners who take on the faith of Israel as sojourners and the covenant sign, they took Passover (12:48-49)

In the next book, Leviticus, when God gives Israel the 2nd greatest commandment, love your neighbor as yourself, that's for non-Jews: Lev 19:34: ***The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.***

Israel was to love the foreigners as themselves, and Jesus affirmed that was the greatest commandment relating to mankind, and when the scribe asked “who is my neighbor,” Jesus illustrated it with a story of a Samaritan showing cross-cultural counter-cultural love. That was not a new spin Jesus put on the command to love others as yourself, that was part and parcel of the OT command itself. Not only was Israel to love foreigners, but believing foreigners were to be welcomed into full worship equally with the Jewish people!

Lev 22:18 says offerings could be from any man of “*Israel or of the aliens in Israel ...*” Lev 17:8-16 also says believing foreigners in Israel can bring other burnt offerings and sacrifices. They were treated the same under the Law in their participation in worship, and that chapter repeatedly clearly treats the Israelite and non-Israelite believers the same in worship in every way in God’s Law.

So as OT Israelites came with offerings, non-Israelite believers in Yahweh could *and would* come next to Israelites, side by side in worship, by God’s inspired law and will, from Israel’s very start.

Now turn to Matthew 1. We could keep going through the OT to see God's multi-colored manifold grace, as Ephesians 3 calls it, His multi-ethnic family plan of faith that He announced in Genesis to Abraham. The first page of the NT also recaps and retraces how in Abraham's family tree, all the families of earth were blessed:

Mt 1:1 *The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:* ² *Abraham was the father of*

...

Why start with Abraham not Adam? Matthew wants to trace Jesus through the Jews and as the fulfillment of the covenant promises to Abraham to bless all nations of the earth through him and his seed.

² *Abraham was the father of Isaac ...* [who did Isaac marry? God tells him not to marry someone in the promised land, but a bride from 450 miles away, who was "**Aramean/Syrian**" – Gen 25:20] ... *Isaac the father of Jacob ...* [Jacob marries from the area we know as **Iraq** today, called Mesopotamia or Haran in OT times] *and Jacob the father of Judah [who married a **Canaanite**] and his brothers* [some of the 12 sons of Jacob married women from what we would call **Arab** nations today, one marries on the continent we call **Africa** today, so even the original 12 tribes were multi-ethnic].

³ *Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar [**Canaanite**] ...* ⁵ *Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab [also a **Canaanite**] ... Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth [**Moabite** from area near Sodom and Gomorrah, pagan enemies of Israel, she converts to faith in Lord and is welcomed into the multi-ethnic family of faith]*

... ⁶ *Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah [what was his ethnicity? Uriah the **Hittite**. If we take Song of Solomon as a love story of Solomon's bride, she describes herself as black or dark in her skin, dark as the curtains of Kedar, while he is lighter, ruddy; a marriage celebrated for all time in inspired Scripture]*

All in the line of Jesus, v. 21: "*She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save **His people** from their sins.*"

And right out the gate of the NT, Matthew wants us to know "His people" has long included people who were non-Jews; Africans, Arabs, Arameans, Syrians, Iraqis, Canaanites, wives of Hittites, Moabites, many whose skin was not light, every shade in God's palette, red, brown, yellow, black, and white, make up His people.

That's good news for us Americans who are Johnny-come-lately. Asians and Caucasians, even European descent later receive grace. His people are not just the people in the middle east, but chapter 2 has men from the distant east, '3 kings of Orient are' (or wherever they came from), they came from the east to worship Jesus, and we who are in the distant west, are prophesied to be worshippers, too. Matthew chapter 8 says "*many will come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom...*"

I think Matthew may be my favorite book in the Bible! I think it's no coincidence Matthew's gospel begins with Abraham in 1:1, making a connection with the Genesis 12 promise. It closes in its final verses with a direct phrase from Gen 12:3: "*therefore go and make disciples of all nations [ethnos] ...*" The gospel that was preached to Abraham is to be fulfilled through his descendents, us.

We can be a part of the fulfillment of Gen 12:3, God's multi-ethnic church family of people all clothed in the same righteousness and cleansed by the same-color-blood of a Savior who looked different than most of us ethnically or externally but inwardly His blood was just like ours and was shed on the cross instead of ours! Hallelujah!

That's what all God's multi-ethnic family will be saying in heaven, the innumerable multitude John saw worshipping Jesus from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying "Hallelujah, worthy is the Lamb who was slain!" From Genesis to Revelation, that's the plan, for every tongue divided in Genesis 11 to be reunited in heaven by the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world

Most of us probably don't look like this Jewish Messiah physically but He makes us look like Him spiritually. God decided to adopt us who aren't like Him. He treats us like His only begotten Son Jesus, to the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph 1:6). Christ delights to take people who look differently and make them look more like Christ, to take people who think differently to think more like Him.

This has implications for churches, for families, for adoptions, for marriage, for missions, for ministries, how we view the world, how we read the Bible, how we pray for and think of other nations, etc. And I pray He uses His truth to help us think and live differently as we descendants of Abraham fulfill that OT Great Commission, for the glory of God in His multi-ethnic family plan. That's all review and re-introduction to Abraham, his calling and ours. *Let's pray.*

¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis*, 1st ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 246.

² Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 187-88.

³ Fruchtenbaum, 265.

⁴ Iain Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between the Promise and Reality: The Gospel According to Abraham*, 70-71.