

A PROMISE TO BLESS THE WORLD

Genesis 22:18

The Bible's story opens with a grand vision of God's intentions for humanity only to be quickly followed by a lengthy section tracing humanity's persistent rebellion against God and His intentions. Humanity's rebellion, however, did not negate God's good intention. Beginning in Genesis chapter twelve, the Bible traces God's promise to bless humanity by restoring His grand vision. This lesson will consider that promise and its fulfillment as part of our ongoing series considering humanity's story in the Bible.

The Seed Promise

- After dedicating a lengthy section to tracing the spreading, destructive impact of sin within the world, Genesis turns its attention to God's response to humanity's sin problem – He promised to bless the world through Abraham's family (*Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18*).
- Although God initially gave little information about the promise, He slowly revealed more details as He confirmed the promise and passed it to subsequent generations of Abraham's family (*cf. Genesis 26:15; 28:10-15*). For example:
 - God revealed that the promise would continue through Judah's family line and would focus on a future leader (*Genesis 49:10*).
 - God added an important element to the promise when He merged it with the promise He made to king David (a king from the line of Judah) – the promise to bless the world intertwined with the promise that David's "throne shall be established forever"¹ (*2 Samuel 7:1-16*).
- Despite God's promises, Israel (Abraham's descendants) struggled and seemed to be on the brink of collapse by the end of time period covered in the Old Testament. The nation's situation created anticipation for the promise's fulfillment while the prophets who worked during that time offered insights into its fulfillment. For example:
 - The Old Testament ends as an unfinished story that reflects the Israelites' anticipations regarding God's then-unfulfilled promises (*cf. 2 Chronicles 36:23; Malachi 4:5-6*).
 - The prophets gave shape to that anticipation by revealing:
 - The promise's fulfillment would be connected to a kingdom that would rule the entire world and be established forever (*Daniel 2:31-45; 7:1-14*).
 - The promise's fulfillment would include all nations, changing the international relationships featured in the Old Testament (*cf. Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Isaiah 19:16-25*).

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



- The promise's fulfillment would be connected to a Davidic and divine king who would rule that kingdom and who would usher in a period of everlasting peace (*cf. Isaiah 9:1-7; 11:1-10*).
 - The promise's fulfillment would be connected to a rightful ruler who would serve as both king and priest (*Ezekiel 21:24-27*), ushering in a new covenant between God and humanity (*Jeremiah 31:31-34*).
- The New Testament opens by connecting the fulfillment of God's promise to Jesus.
 - Jesus is the rightful heir to both Abraham and David (*Matthew 1:1*).
 - Jesus is God's anointed king (*cf. Matthew 2:1-6*) who bears God's very identity (*Matthew 3:13-17; John 1:1, 14*).
 - Jesus announced his establishment of a new, undefeatable kingdom (*Matthew 16:13-18*).
 - Jesus announced the inauguration of a new covenant (*Matthew 26:26-29; Hebrews 7:1-8:13*).
 - Jesus taught the Old Testament story found its conclusion in him (*Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44-47*).
 - Paul believed God fulfilled His promise to Abraham in Jesus (*Galatians 3:15-18*).
- The promise to bless the whole world did not merely focus on the establishment of a peaceful kingdom; it focused on the peace that kingdom would create between God and humanity through Jesus (*cf. Romans 5:6-11; Ephesians 1:3-10*).
- Peace between God and humanity results in peace among humans; the reality of the seed promise and its fulfillment is thus expressed through individuals who love one another with a love like the one that motivated God's promise (*1 John 4:7-11*)

Applications

- Jesus fulfilled God's promise to restore His plans for humanity, but the fulfillment has not yet been completed (*cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28*).
- As followers of Jesus, we become a key part of the way he fulfills God's promise – our dedication to Jesus results in transformed ways of thinking and living that evidence God's reality and plan (*cf. Ephesians 2:1-3:11*).
- We display God's reality and will through Jesus-styled relationships. The characteristics of those relationships we ought to be actively cultivating include:
 - Love (*Ephesians 5:1-2*).
 - Thanksgiving and joy (*Ephesians 5:3-20*).
 - Submission (*Ephesians 5:21-6:9*).

God promised to bless the world by restoring His plans for humanity through Jesus. While He has begun fulfilling that promise, it is not yet completed. He invites us, through Jesus, to join Him in working to accomplish His purpose, which raises a question – “*Are you willing to submit yourself to God's will so that He can use you to accomplish His good purposes?*”

