

The End Times
From Beginning to End
Genesis 12:1-3

How many of you like to read a good book? Your idea of a fun Friday night is sitting in your favorite spot with a lamp and a book. Let's say you get a new big novel and you sit down to read. You have some sweet tea on the table next to you and your favorite dog in your lap and you open up this new book and start to read. First, you open up the book to wherever it falls, somewhere in the middle and you start reading. For some reason it doesn't make a lot of sense so after a page or two you turn to the last chapter and see how it ends. But it's hard to know what is happening. Why did Bob jump off that cliff? And who is Rebecca? And why did she start crying when the cat meowed. I mean, what is going on here? This book is not written very well, is it? It's hard to make sense of it. Probably ought to get another book, right?

Of course not. Everybody knows that's not how you read a book. But so often that is how people who are studying what we call the end times treat the Bible. They often start in Revelation and try to figure out what is going to happen but it doesn't really make sense. Then maybe they will turn over to Daniel or Ezekiel or maybe Joel or Isaiah. And they aren't wrong to look in those places but the best place to look in scripture when starting a study on the end times is in the book of Genesis. Start at the beginning. And that's what we are going to do today.

Genesis is an absolutely fascinating book in the Bible. So many good stories can be found there: the creation, Adam and Eve, the flood, the tower of Babel. All of that is such good reading. But did you know that all of that, from creation to Abraham were in the first eleven chapters? That's a lot of real estate to cover in eleven chapters. And the rest of Genesis, from chapter twelve to chapter fifty, is all about Abraham and his family. So, we can see just from the number of chapters and verses that Abe and his family must be pretty important in the scheme of things.

But when it comes to a thorough study of end times, you have to begin at the beginning. You have to start in Genesis because the end times start with Israel and the end times end with Israel. So, today we are going to have a quick flyover to see how Israel got it's start and why it is so important to our study of end times.

At the end of Genesis chapter eleven, we are briefly introduced to Abram, the man who God would later call Abraham. Not much is said in chapter eleven except we know he was married to Sarai and she was barren. It also says that he was living in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans. Archaeologists have discovered that in the time of Abram, Ur was a major commercial city. They were very advanced for their time with a huge post office and libraries and they were proficient in math and astronomy. We might think that 6,000 years ago people were cavemen grunting at each other but that was not the case in this part of the world. We also know that the residents of Ur, including Abram, were idol worshipers. But God decided, for whatever reason, to make Abram the father of His chosen people, His special people.

So, let's turn to **Genesis chapter 12** and let's see what God told Abram and see how that affects us and the times we live in. Plus, we will see a brief overview of what happens between then and the very end. **Genesis 12:1-3** says, *“The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.*

*² “I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.^[a]*

*³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”*

Oh, so I forgot to tell you guys that I have some good news! Don't tell anybody because it's not a done deal yet but I got an email from some guy I don't know who said he was a Nigerian prince. And he is trying to get a large sum of money to his son who lives here in Chico. He told me that if I will just use my social security number on the transfer that I can keep several hundred thousand dollars of it. And he promised it was not a scam. So, I'm pretty excited about that promise. What do you think?

I think that's probably how Abram must of first thought about God's promise. Seventy-five-year-old Abram with a barren wife was going to be the father of a great nation? Right. And the whole world would be blessed by him. Yea, sure. But I love how **verse 4** starts out. It starts out with Abram starting out. It says, *“So, Abram left as the Lord had told him...”* He

might have been an idol worshiper before but when the one, true God spoke to him, Abram was immediately obedient. Maybe that was one reason why God chose him.

So, let's look quickly at the promise that God made with Abe. There were three parts to it. First, God promised Abram a land. *"Go from your country... to the land I will show you."* Now, later on, in **Genesis 15** and **Ezekiel 47**, God gives the specific boundaries of the land that would belong to Israel but never in its history has Israel ever occupied the full amount. God promised them land that is now from Egypt all the way to Iraq, which is about 300,000 square miles and right now Israel is about 8,000 square miles. It's smaller than New Jersey. So, when you hear that some country is attacking Israel because they want the land, just know that is definitely not the main reason. And we will talk more about that later.

The second part of God's promise is that He would give Abram descendants. **Verse 2** says, *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you."* In **Genesis 22**, God reiterates this part of the promise by telling Abraham, as he was then known, that his descendants would be as innumerable as the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore. This is a pretty amazing prophecy since at this time Abram was 75 years old and his wife was barren. In fact, **Hebrews 11** describes him as being *"as good as dead."* But God had plans to use him and no promise of God can be thwarted.

Then the last part of the promise is in **verse 3**. It says, *"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* That sounds pretty good, doesn't it? I want to be a blessing to people. Don't you? Well, with a little bit of study, I have come to realize that this is way beyond being a little bit of a blessing to some people. Talk about underselling it! This is actually the biggest part of the blessing.

Now, some people say that the fact that Christians, Muslims and Jews can claim Abraham as their spiritual father is a fulfillment of this prophecy. And, yes, Abe has been a blessing to the religious world. But that's not the real blessing. It's way bigger even than that. The blessing God is promising Abram is that one of Abe's descendants will be the Messiah. And let me show you how I know that.

I want you to see it so turn over to the New Testament to the book of Galatians. Turn to **Galatians 3** and let's read **verses 6-8**. Paul was writing to the church in Galatia to correct some false teachers who were saying that you needed to trust in Jesus but also you needed to keep the Law of Moses. It was basically a mix of Christianity and Judaism. But

Paul uses Abraham to show that it is by faith that we are saved and it always has been. Look at **Galatians 3**. *So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”⁷ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”*

It says that God announced the Gospel in advance to Abraham. What is the Gospel? The Gospel is the Good News that the Messiah would come and take away the sins of the world. Even though Abraham never heard the name Jesus, he knew there was going to come a perfect sacrifice into the world to pay the price God the Father said was due for sin.

This also tells us that even the Old Testament saints were saved the same way we are: by God’s grace and through faith. Abraham was a man of great faith and it was through that faith that we know we will see him in Heaven. And it was through Abe’s immediate obedience that we know his faith was real and alive.

Now...I hear ya. Todd, that’s almost interesting and I’m glad that worked out for dear old Abe. But what does that have to do with me and what does that have to do with end times? Well, I first wanted to show you how it started for Israel and I will show you in a minute how the end times ends with Israel but we need to be reminded that this promise to Abram was an eternal promise. It wasn’t just for Abe. That part in **verse 3** about *“I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you,* – that still applies even today. And that applies to individuals and to countries.

Tiny little Israel has always been the United States’ greatest ally in the Middle East. We get along with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and a few of the other countries over there but Israel is the only one we can really trust. The question is, how much longer will they be able to trust us? Most end times scholars agree that the United States is not going to be a factor in the end times. We don’t know what is going to happen. For whatever reason, we are just not players that are mentioned in scripture that play any part in the very last days.

In years past and up the present administration, we have always been supporters of Israel. And God has blessed the United States because of it, just like His promise to Abram assures. But there is a large faction of citizens and politicians who hate Israel and as soon as they are able to change some laws, the United States will no longer support Israel and will, in fact, stand against that country in every way possible. And what happens then?

God has already told us. *I will curse those who curse you.* And that could very well be why we are not mentioned in the end times.

We study the end times so we can be ready and watching and looking forward to it. But one of the major signs we need to be watching for is when the world turns against Israel. I remember hearing a rabbi talking about this and his closing remarks were, “*Keep your eye on Israel, especially Jerusalem.*” And that is good advice.

Because Israel is God’s chosen people – they are a special nation set apart by God – Satan hates them even more than he hates everybody else. And it has always been that way. Think about the book of Esther. Do you remember Haman? Haman was upset with a Jewish man named Mordecai and it says that Haman was so mad at Mordecai that he didn’t want to just kill Mordecai. He wanted to kill all of Mordecai’s people, the Jews. (Esther 3:6) That doesn’t make any sense. Was Haman crazy? No. Haman wasn’t necessarily crazy. But he was demonically influenced. Satan hates the Jews and wants them all dead.

Probably worst-case scenario is Adolph Hitler. He was able to kill six million Jews. Now, I don’t know if Haman or Hitler were actually possessed by demons but they were definitely influenced and inspired by demons. That’s true of almost all people who are antisemitic. People who hate Jews just because they are Jews...that doesn’t make sense. There’s no logic to it. That is demonic and it goes back all the way to **Genesis 12** where God set them apart to be blessed and it made Satan furious and he wants to kill them even more than he wants to kill Christians, if that’s possible. And it will be that way to the very end of time.

So, let’s talk about the end of time. We have seen how the end times began with Israel. Now, let’s get a quick overview of what happens next and see how it all ends with Israel. I’m not going to spend any time on these events today. This is just to show what happens next. But we will look closer at these events in the weeks to come.

The next thing to happen on the prophetic timeline is the **rapture** of the church. Right now we are living in what scholars call the Church Age. And it started at Pentecost in **Acts 2** when the Holy Spirit came on the disciples. It was basically then that Gentiles were included in the Abrahamic Covenant. Since then there have been prophecies that have been fulfilled about Israel becoming a country again and other prophecies about what happens to Israel but all the prophecies have been fulfilled that need to be fulfilled before the rapture happens. In other words, the rapture could happen at any time. There is no reason it couldn’t happen today or even before this service is over.

What happens at the rapture? The best scripture we have about it is in **1 Thessalonians 4** where we see that at any moment we who are true believers in and followers of Jesus will be caught up in the air to be with the Lord. We aren't told a lot of the details but we know that much and therefore, since it will be a surprise to everybody, the unbelievers left behind can expect all kinds of chaos when they look around and every Christian has just vanished. I can't imagine how they are going to try to explain that away.

So, all believers are raptured to the present Heaven (and I say "present Heaven" for a reason). After the rapture the world that is left down here will experience what is called the **Great Tribulation**. It will be a seven-year period that ushers in the Antichrist. When we look at the Tribulation in more detail we will see that the purpose of this seven-year period will be for the redemption of Israel and for the condemnation of unbelievers. You can read more about this time in **Revelation chapters 6-19**.

At the end of those seven years will be the **Second Coming of Jesus** back to Earth and Jesus will lead all of us that are in Heaven with Him back to Earth and He will completely destroy any unbelievers that are left. You have heard of the Battle of Armageddon? Yeah, Jesus wins that battle. And it's not even close. You can read about that in **Revelation 19**. And **Zechariah 14:4** predicts, *"On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem.* So, that is why I say that the end times begin and end with Israel.

At the conclusion of that battle, **Revelation 21** and **22** describe what is called the **Millenium**. The Millenium is a 1,000-year period of time during which Jesus Himself will reign as King here on Earth from Jerusalem completely fulfilling God's promises to Abraham and his descendants. This is a fascinating subject that is mind-blowing to a lot of people but it is a literal time with Jesus as a literal King on literal Earth. I can't wait to spend some time on that.

After that 1,000 years comes the **Great White Throne Judgment** where all unbelievers will be judged according to their deeds. All the books will be opened that describe everything they have ever done and Jesus will judge them like they wanted to be judged...according to how good they are. Here's a spoiler alert. If the books show any imperfection, any sin, any impure thought or deed, the judgment is eternity in Hell. Read **Revelation 20:11-13** for that.

After that horrible judgment finally comes a **new Heaven and a new Earth** where all who are believers will live with Jesus forever in paradise as it describes in **Revelation 21**.

Whew! That's a lot to take in, isn't it? If you have never studied the end times, it can be hard to believe. But the only way to teach this is to show what scripture says and that's what we are going to do. And that starts with **1 Corinthians 2:14** that says, *"The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."*

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What that means is that if you can't understand and can't believe these things that the Bible says then it may be because you don't have the Holy Spirit living inside of you. And you only get the Holy Spirit when you truly believe that Jesus, who is God, came to Earth 2000 years ago and died on a cross to pay the price for your sin that the Father said was due. We are all sinners. **Romans 3:23** says that. And what we deserve for our sin is eternal death in Hell. **Romans 6:23** says that. But **Romans 3:23** also says that *"we all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."* It's basically what **John 3:16** is saying. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

All you have to do is believe but that belief will change your life. It will change how you act and how you react. It will change your thoughts and your habits and your mind and your heart. Do you have that kind of faith? If not, do it right now as the music plays.