



Rock Creek Baptist Church

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It Matters Where You Pitch Your Tent
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Pitching your tent on the foundation of
God's promises

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Story: what happens when you don't pitch your tent as instructed...

We were introduced to Abram and Sarai, who become Abraham and Sarah, back in Genesis 11. Let's review what we know about them coming into chapter 12

Genesis 11:27-32

This is the account of Terah's family line. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah. Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive. Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there. Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

With Lot's father and Abraham's father dead, that leaves Abraham and Sarah and their nephew Lot, living in the land of "rest for the traveler." Abraham's father has "set his tent" in a nice cozy place where Abraham and his family have grown wealthy and presumably very comfortable. But they'd give all of that away if they could just have a son. That's exactly what God promises them, commanding Abraham to take his family to a place he will learn about on the way and he will be made into a great nation. Sarah is 65 and Abraham 75 when they uproot everything and head out on God's promises.

Genesis 12:1-9

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples

on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Seven promises God made to Abraham

- 1) I will make you into a great nation
- 2) I will bless you
- 3) I will make your name great
- 4) You will be a blessing (be seen as blessed)
- 5) I will bless those who bless you
- 6) I will curse those who curse you
- 7) All people on the earth will be blessed through you

Not only is Sarah's womb empty but there is this emptiness, this one thing missing from their lives.

Are you ready to abandon everything to be filled with God's promise? Can you drop what is in your hands so that they can receive what God wants to give you?

This last promise, that Abraham will be a blessing even to the outsiders pertains to us in a big way

When Abraham finally must set up camp, it matters where he pitches his tent. Between Bethel (house of God and a symbol of fellowship with God) and Ai (a symbol of the world.) Abraham stands between God and the people, and through him (his example of a God follower) they will be blessed. Ai (the world) is East of Abraham, evil is often portrayed as "to the east" and Abraham keeps it in it's proper place, away from him. He raises an altar, calls on God, and sets back out on the road.

Genesis 13:1-18

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD. Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD. The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.

Abraham returns to the scene of God's promise, where he had earlier pitched his tent.

Lot pitches his tent right up next to the most wicked cities he can find.

Abraham is gracious and sacrificial, willing to put Lot's interests ahead of his own. He stakes his tent on the promises of God. Lot stakes his tent on selfishness and self indulgence.

1 Corinthians 13:5

It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Lot is in the wrong place at the wrong time, pitches his tent near danger, and has to be rescued by Abraham in Genesis 14, 18, and 19. Abraham is in a position to rescue Lot because he's where he's supposed to be, his tent is pitched in the right place.

And the covenant of Abraham applies also to us, because of where Abraham pitched his tent (on faith) and because of the way that God has grafted us into the plan.

Romans 11:11-27

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring! I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

The same God who planted a garden in Eden is now grafting us outsiders who don't deserve it into the tree

Luke 13:6-8

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it.

This is Jesus in this parable, nourishing the tree, saving it, because He keeps His promises. And now, He grafts us in that we might also be saved.

John 20:11-18

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Mary, through her tears, thinks Jesus is the gardener.

In a way - He is! There He is risen from the grave, saving His people, grafting us in through His plan, and saving that tree.

What promises has God made to you that lay untapped? Think about the legacy you leave based on where you pitch your tent. Don't assume that your story can't be like those people of faith we read about. How will you know what God will do unless you step out in faith? Look at some promises God has made to His people:

John 14:12

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

How can we do even greater things?! Only because God wills it.

Mark 11:22-24

“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

The prayer of faith can move mountains.

Peter believed this, lets look at what happened with him. Remember the woman who touched Jesus' cloak?

Matthew 9:20-22

Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

Acts 5:15

As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

God is faithful to His promises, even when they might sound crazy

It's easy to say in your comfort zone, or even to edge right up to a wicked place.

Following God instead can be scary. But it's always worth it!

Think of what God is calling you to, stake your tent on His promises. And realize this not only affects you but those who are watching you. Those who come after you. What legacy might you leave based on where you pitch your tent?