

July 2, 2006 AM

**THE GOSPEL OF ABRAM (PART 2):  
NATION BUILDING  
GENESIS 12.1-5A**

**1. God's Call to Abram (1-3).**

**A. "You Must Leave" (1)**

**B. "I Will Bless You" (2-3)**

First of the seven-fold blessing: "And I will make you a great nation."

"Seven-fold" - not arbitrary; seven-fold structures many times parallel the days of creation. At the least, they represent a completeness or a wholeness which should not go unnoticed.

Along with the context and content, the structure says: *Creation's purpose disrupted and corrupted by sin will be realized in and through God's word to Abram.*

**1. "I WILL MAKE YOU A GREAT NATION" (2A)**

**A. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN NATION BUILDING**

"I will make" - echoing words of creation. [Note: God's sovereignty - generally referring to his independent control over all things.]

God is the one who will cause this to come to pass in his time and in his way. This does not mean that he will not use human agency or *means*. In fact, it is through Abram and his obedient faith that this will come to be. But that does not take away one iota from the fact that it is God who is accomplishing this task.

Note the contrast with Babel. There the people exerted their own wills against God's. They built the city/nation in their own time and on their own terms.

The difference here will be that God will build the city through a submissive and patient servant; i.e., a servant who, unlike Adam and the others, will not grasp for position before the time.

The fact that God is in control of the whole process of nation building—i.e., who is in control where—is affirmed throughout Scripture. Cf. Ps 75; Dan 4.34f.

**B. ABRAM AS THE "REPLACEMENT" NATION**

"What is going on in the text?" Immediate context: 10.1–11.9 (Table of Nations and Tower of Babel)

Table of Nations = the new world that comes to be after the flood. Noah's and his sons exit the ark and have children. These children are formed into nations; specifically seventy (70) of them. New creation and fall.

Recurring pattern: Adam; Cain; Seth; Noah

This is where we are in the story. There has been a fall and now God will raise another up. Abram will be a "replacement" nation for all the nations of the earth. That is, the nation that is formed in and through Abram will be the nation through whom all of the nations of the earth will be blessed. The nations of the earth will be put right according to God's intentions through the seed of Abram.

In other words, the Abram nation will be a priestly nation who will stand in the place of and be the means through which they will be reconciled to God. The Abram nation will exist for the life of the world.

Note Abram's seed, Israel. Seventy elders ascend Mt. Sinai to eat with God as representatives of Israel and the nations. Note also the sacrifice of 70 bulls at Feast of Booths/Ingathering.

This will be realized initially and in the short-run through the nation of Israel. But, as Paul understands the promise

given to Abram, this promise actually encompasses the entire created order (cf. Rom 4.13). As the plan of God comes to its consummation in Christ—the long term fulfillment and the true seed of Abram—we see that God has created a great nation, “replacing” all of the nations of the earth (including national Israel). Cf. 1 Pet 2.9.

What we live in this day in the church of Jesus Christ is, in part, the fulfillment of the promise of the gospel given to Abram. It is not a “side benefit” or an aid to get to the *real* substance of the promises. The church of Jesus Christ is an integral aspect of God’s fulfillment of his promise given to Abram to make him a great nation.

### C. NATION AS CULTURE

[Look at lesson concerning *Church and Culture* in Feb.] The cultural aspects of God’s promise—God’s gospel—have not disappeared.

“Why did God say that he would make Abram a great *nation*?” God could have used a more general term and said that he would make him a great *people* or *tribe* or even *family*. Why *nation*? Victor Hamilton: Whereas the word translated *people* “refers to people or nations in terms of centripetal unity and cohesiveness,” this word translated *nation* “is linked with government and territory” (372).

Seed, blessing, and *land* have been the promises of God from the beginning. It is necessary to have a land if there will be a nation.

Land: sanctuary (worship); home; place of dominion. This is the promise of land given to Abram. Includes nation.

The nation is, in short, a complete culture. A culture is, generally, a community who relate to God, one another, and the non-human creation around them in particular ways.

Culture is inevitably and inescapably religious. That is, the culture will take a particular position on how it will relate to the one true God and conform to his standards of right and wrong, good and evil.

This nation will be *visible*, will have a “sanctuary,” will make and enforce laws, and will pass culture to children.

Initially fulfilled in Israel, ultimately fulfilled in Christ (cf. Dan 2 and the rock cut out of the mountain that becomes a mountain/kingdom filling the entire earth). The church of Jesus Christ is that transnational nation that seeks to establish colonies throughout the created order. We are a counter-culture to all culture and cultural institutions that do not submit to Christ as Lord.

### D. NATION AS DEVELOPED (ESCHATOLOGICAL)

Life begins in the Garden and is to be developed. A nation is a developed culture. The nation is the goal or the end of the dominion process.

Movement of Scripture. In the beginning we see God planting a Garden and giving man responsibility for it and eventually to develop the world. At the end of Scripture we see a glorious city/mountain/nation as a product of the dominion taken. Man and woman ⇒ swarms of people

### E. NATION BUILT UPON DEATH

Gen 15: Abram’s descendants will go down into Egypt and God will make them a great nation *there* (cf. Ge 46.3; Dt 26.5). Unlike the city of man—the Tower of Babel—the nation that God will make is not built by arrogant power. Rather God will build this nation through the death of the people.

Ultimately this is fulfilled in Christ in whose death the cornerstone is laid for foundation of the new city/nation. The nation will continue to be built upon the humble sacrifice of God’s people. The apostles and prophets whose deaths provide the rest of foundation for the people of God (cf. Eph 2.20), are some of the first examples of this.

**Application: (1)** We are to be culture/nation building.

**Application: (2)** All culture-building vocations must be gospel-shaped.

**Application: (3)** The nation will be built upon death.