INTRODUCTION
A. It is rather funny sometimes, is it not, to take a backward look at people’s forward glances? They can look ridiculous once we have the luxury of hindsight. That is because even the best human planners cannot see the future. There is a Planner who can see the future — and His plans are never wrong.

B. Someone told a story about the city fathers of New York as they contemplated the future growth of their city. They laid out the streets and numbered them from the center outward. When they began, there were only six or seven streets. In their planning maps, they projected how large they thought the City of New York might grow. Reaching beyond their wildest imagination, they drew streets on the map all the way out to 19th Street. They called it "Boundary Street" because they were sure that would be as large as New York City would every grow. I am sure that at the time it probably seemed right! Who could have possibly guessed that New York would become the largest city in the country with a population of 7.5 million?

It is rather funny sometimes, is it not, to take a backward look at people’s forward glances? They can look ridiculous once we have the luxury of hindsight. That is because even the best human planners cannot see the future. There is a Planner who can see the future — and His plans are never wrong.

   1. Would not it be something to know the stories that tomorrow’s newspaper will hold? Imagine what you could do if you had knowledge of what will happen in the future. It would never rain on your picnic.
   2. You could always be in the right place at the right time.
   3. Your investments in the stock market would never fail. You could buy love and sell high all the time.
   4. You would be the world’s greatest weatherman.
   5. Of course it does not work that way. No human can see the future. We are left with only the power to guess.

D. The God of heaven is a Planner with full knowledge of the future. Therefore His plans always work out and His purposes never fail or end up looking ridiculous. Through the course of history God has, when it served His purposes, made certain details of His foreknowledge available to those who love Him and His written word. We call this presentation of future events prophesy. No, His purpose in this is not so we can make better investments in the stock market or plan better picnics. Rather, it is to validate His existence and power. When we can look back and see that it all happened just as God said it would, it produces faith in us.

"Looking Back On God’s Forward Glances" we could call it - looking back on prophecy that has already been fulfilled. It is a great way to build faith.

E. As we look into the life of Abraham this morning, we are going to take a backward look on one of God’s very important forward glances. You will find it mentioned in Galatians 3:8.

F. Let’s look back to the portion of Abraham’s life where this "gospel sermon beforehand" was preached and see what we can learn to build our faith. It so happens that it is found in the very next portion of Scripture in our study of Abraham’s life. (How is that for planning?) Please turn with me to Genesis 12.

(Read Genesis 12:1-9)

We saw last time Abram’s original call out of Ur of the Chaldees, described in the closing verses of chapter 11. For whatever reason, when Abram left Ur, he went only as far as Haran (about 600 miles) and stopped there. Some suggest he stopped because his faith was weak. Others
suggest that God’s leading was progressive and did not come all at once. It is also possible that he may have been forced to stop his journey due to his father’s poor health since the text tells us that Terah died there in Haran. Here we see that he remained in Haran until the death of his father, when God called him out once again.

F.B. Meyer, writing in his book, ABRAHAM, made the observation that, "God’s commands are not always accompanied by reasons, but always by promises..."(1) If we know much about the Bible and think about that statement, it is surely true. It is not God’s style to give a reason to His people for every command. Sometimes we wish He would, but He does not. True to that principle, the first three verses of chapter 12 that we just read contain a command and a series of promises. The command (and note there is no explanation as to why) is in verse 1: (Read Genesis 12:1) - The promises are in verses 2 and 3: (Read Genesis 12:2-3) - There are five promises to Abraham in these verses:

1. God would make him a great nation. (That would be the nation of Israel.)
2. God would bless him and make his name great.
3. Abraham would be a blessing to others.
4. God would bless or curse those who blessed or cursed Abraham.
5. All the families of the earth would be blessed through him.

G. It is this last phrase about all the families of the earth being blessed that contains the words Paul wrote about in Galatians 3:8. It is a forward glance, through Abraham, at the "gospel" or "good news" that God would reveal 2000 years later in the New Testament era. Just how was this forward glance to be fulfilled? How were all of the families of the earth blessed through Abraham? That is where we will spend our time.

H. There are at least two answers to how this forward glance was fulfilled: (1) Through Abraham’s example and (2) Through Abraham’s Descendant. Let us look at them one at a time.

DISCUSSION

I. ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH WERE TO BE BLESSED THROUGH ABRAHAM’S EXAMPLE.

A. When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson in 1804 to explore the Pacific Northwest, little was known about the land that lay between their jump-off point just outside of St. Louis, Missouri and the Pacific Ocean. In search of a Northwest Passage, some kind of hoped for water connection between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, they covered nearly 8,000 miles in a time when horses and feet were the only means of travel. When their expedition was completed two and a half years later, they had failed to find a legendary Northwest Passage. Of course there was no such passage. What they had done was blaze a trail and provides records and maps that other explorers, and ultimately, settlers coming west, would use for years to come. Lewis and Clark were pioneers.

B. Pioneers are special people. They are the first to accomplish things of great importance. They step out of the crowd with courage and blaze a trail for others to follow where there has been no trail.

C. Abraham was a pioneer of faith, commissioned by God Himself. The records and maps of his travels are what we are reading in Genesis. In much the same way as those who came after Lewis and Clark consulted their records and maps before departing, the “faith traveler” can consult the story of Abraham. His example as a pioneer of faith speaks volumes. It is no surprise that it is referred to many times by writers in both the Old and New Testaments.

D. What was it about Abraham that caused God to choose him out of all the other human beings on the earth in his time and use him to pioneer faith? It is not hard to figure out
if we just look at his example. In fact, a hint of it is found in the very next verse of our text (verse 4): "So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him..." In verse one God said "go". In verse four it says Abraham "went." It is really that simple. Abraham, because he trusted God, was willing to do what God told him to do – even without explanation as to why. Without hesitation, without demanding to know all the rationale for the command, without complaint – this faith pioneer simply obeyed.

E. You see, faith is never complicated. It never has been. It is always simple to understand. Just do what God says. Where it becomes complicated is when we think we know better how things should be run. Complication comes when our will runs counter to God’s will and that age-old argument ensues. Will I trust God in this instance or not?

F. Listen again to the way the Hebrew writer described Abraham’s faith in Hebrews 11:8:

G. Thinking back to my words about Lewis and Clark, President Jefferson did not pick just anyone to explore the Northwest on a government commission. He picked the two men he knew would have the courage and determination to go. God chose Abraham for the same reason. He was not a perfect man, but God knew that, out of all the people on the earth of that day, he would obey. Later, because of the perpetual nature of these promises, God would repeat the one about blessing all the families of the earth to Abraham’s son, Isaac. On that occasion, recorded in Genesis 26:4-5, God said, "...all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me...."

In Genesis 15:6-7, a very important passage for us to understand, we learn that such faith is what justifies us. There it says that Abraham "...believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

H. There are those today who teach a kind of useless faith that has no concern at all for obedience. In fact, they believe that obedience is tantamount to a denial of justification by faith. They reduce biblical faith to simple agreement that God exists and that Jesus is His Son. They counsel people that "God did it all and there is nothing for you left to do."

I. Sadly, churches are full of people who have bought into this and it is one reason why there is such a disparity today between the number of people who go to church and the sad lack of morality among them. If such impotent teaching is the essence of Bible faith, then I think God picked a very poor apologist for it in obedient Abraham? Oh that we had churches full of people with the faith of Abraham!

J. Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God; and he that trusts God, obeys God.

K. Today we look backward upon what God saw was yet to happen in Abraham’s future, namely that he would be the first of multitudes of people who would be blessed and justified by the kind of faith that pleases God.

L. All the families of the earth were to be blessed by Abraham’s example of faith.

II. ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH WERE TO BE BLESSED THROUGH ABRAHAM’S DESCENDANT.

A. This promise that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him was repeated by God to Abraham right after Abraham showed his willingness to sacrifice his son on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22:18. (Lord willing, we will consider that in a future message.) While the same idea is presented there, the wording is just a little different than our text in Genesis 12.

B. In Genesis 22 we read, It is as though God were standing with a hand on Abraham’s shoulder and pointing off into the distant future, telling him what He would someday do for the world through his obedient faith. Of course what He pointed to was Christ.

C. In John 8:56, Jesus was speaking to some of his Jewish detractors and He said these very interesting words. I do not know whether this is figurative and means that somehow
Abraham realized the meaning of the promise God gave him for blessing the world or whether it means that subsequently, after Abraham’s death, perhaps at the transfiguration, Abraham got to see the fulfillment of God’s promise – that is, he got to see Christ’s day. Whatever it means, it brings up a very important observation.

D. The Bible is not a hodge-podge collection of unrelated stories about ancient people which have no meaning. There is a central theme to the Bible. That theme is Jesus Christ. Luke said just that when he described Jesus’ encounter with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27: "He [Jesus] explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." According to Jesus, it is He who is in all the Scriptures.

E. As a new Christian I was taught a simple, three-part outline of the Bible that really helped me understand what the Scriptures mean. Some of you have heard it. Others would do well to hear it. The outline goes this way:
1. The Theme of the OT is “Someone is coming.
2. The Theme of the gospels is, “Someone is hear.”
3. The Theme of the NT is, “Someone is coming again.”

F. Notice that the "Someone" is in each section of the Bible. Yes, it is also the story of God’s interaction with various people and nations, but always, behind these stories, this theme, the "Someone" is never very far away.

G. Henry H. Halley, in his venerable work, HALLEY’S BIBLE HANDBOOK, put it very well when he described what the Old Testament is about. Notice the theme I mentioned of "Someone is Coming." "The Old Testament was written to create an anticipation of, and pave the way for, the Coming of Christ. It is the Story of the Hebrew Nation, dealing largely with events and exigencies of its own times. But all through the Story there runs unceasing Expectancy and Prevision of the Coming of ONE MAJESTIC PERSON, who will... Bless the Whole World. This Person, long before he arrived, came to be known as the MESSIAH... "Starting with Vague Hints, there soon begin to appear Specific Definite Predictions, which, as the story sweeps forward become more Specific, more Definite, and more Abundant..."So that, by the time we come to the end of the Old Testament, the entire Story of Christ has been Pre-Written and Pre-figured in Language and Symbol, which, taken as a whole, Cannot Refer to Any Other Person in History."

H. Our text verse is one of those passages that prefigured Christ.

I. Listen as I give you just a tiny sample of the Old Testament verses that tell the story of that Someone Who was coming:
1. In Genesis 3:15, Someone is mentioned called the "Seed of the Woman" who would someday crush Satan’s head. In the New Testament we see Jesus born of a virgin woman, do battle with Satan and defeat him. Matthew 1:22-23.
2. In Genesis 4 we see the institution of blood sacrifice, and the idea of substitutionary death for the sins of another. In the New Testament we see that Jesus offered his blood (life) as "the just for the unjust." 1 Peter 3:18.
3. In Genesis 12 (our text), 18, and 22 we see God’s promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham’s descendants. In the New Testament genealogies we see that Jesus was the descendant of Abraham. Matthew 1:1.
4. In Genesis 22 we see Abraham as a loving father, obeying an unheard of command – offering up his son as a sacrifice. In the New Testament we find God offering up His Son for our sins.
5. In Genesis 49 we find the prediction that the scepter (rule) would not depart from the tribe of Judah until One referred to as Shiloh ("He Whose Right It Is") would come. It was the prediction of One Specific Person from the tribe of
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Judah (Jesus was of the tribe of Judah) would come and rule the nations. Genesis 49:10-11.

6. In Exodus 12 we see the institution of the Passover and the death of a Lamb that saved the people from death. In the New Testament Jesus is called by John, "The Lamb that takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29, 36. Jesus is called "our Passover." 1 Corinthians 5:7.

7. In Numbers 21, we have the story of the wilderness wanderings where the people who were bitten by the fiery serpents were saved by looking at a brass form of a fiery serpent lifted high in the air on a pole. Numbers 21:6-9. In the New Testament we see Jesus lifted up on the cross, taking the form of sin on our behalf, though He "knew no sin," so that those who look to Him might live. John 3:14.

8. In 2 Samuel we see Nathan’s prediction that the house and kingdom of David would endure forever. 2 Samuel 7:16. David died, but his Descendant, Jesus Christ, sits on the throne of the Kingdom of God yet today and will do so forever. Acts 2:29-35.

9. And on it goes – hundreds of predictions about the life of Christ made many years before they happened.
   c. The flight of His parents to Egypt. Hosea 11:1.
   e. A detailed description of the crucifixion in Psalm 22, written 1000 years before it happened.
   f. The piercing of His hands and feet. PS 22:16.
   g. His burial in a rich man’s tomb. IS 53:9.

J. Like gold nuggets salted into a stream bed, put there for diligent searchers to find - God’s foreknowledge of His plan to deliver Jesus to the world is unfolded. Someone is Coming. Someone is Coming. Someone is Coming.

K. I would love to portray more for you here but it is far too involved. There are over 300 of these predictions of the Someone who was coming. These words of Abraham in our text are only a tiny fraction of what is there. If you need evidence to build your faith, look up and compare these passages.

CONCLUSION

A. We have been looking at the "Someone is Coming" theme of the Old Testament, which includes the words of our text to Abraham, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." These words have already been fulfilled and are there to build our faith.

B. There are also words that are yet to be fulfilled – words we need to heed. They can be summarized this way: "Someone is Coming Again." The Apostle Peter summarized it this way in a sobering glance into our own future: 2 Peter 3:9-12

C. Are you ready for that day?