

God Makes a Covenant with Abraham



Abraham, Father of the Nations

In the Scriptures, God used many ways to communicate: dreams, events, visions, direct words and angels [messengers of God.] Abram was a person who was receptive to the messages of God. God stepped into his life as someone who directed people through the simple, everyday events of their lives.

Abram was the first in a long line of people called by God to a specific task or mission – one that was revealed to him gradually over time. What was required of Abraham was trust and obedience. Abram's call was more than an invitation to lead his family into Canaan. It was an invitation to a deeper spiritual understanding. While in Canaan, Abram became increasingly aware of God's plans for him and his descendants.

Adults and Teens: Read from your bible:

The First Part of the Covenant

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Call of Abram | [Genesis 12] |
| Promise that Abram would be the Father of Nations | [Genesis 15] |

Abraham's Journeys ~ An Interactive Map

Go to: <http://funbiblestuff.com/interactivemaps/maps.htm>

Children

<http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/english/Gods%20Promise%20to%20Abraham%20English.pdf>

This is a PowerPoint presentation in a pdf format.

1. The Call of Abram
2. The Story of Abraham and Sarah
3. The Three Visitors

These three items can be found at the end of this plan.

ABRAM AND THE FIRST CONVENANT

Do you like to travel?

Well, God asked Abram to travel. To pack up his belongings, leave his home and people and travel almost 1, 000 miles. He heard this divine call at the young age of 75!

Abram wasn't just living in a tent in the middle of nowhere - He lived in Ur. As Scott Hahn says, "It was the Las Vegas of the ancient world."

God asked him to leave this city of comfort, to go to a place he had never seen! Back then there were no travel brochures or internet or even detailed maps! Yet Abram obeyed and through his faithful yes, like Mary's faithful yes, God was able to grow the family of God.

God gave him three covenants:

- 1. I will make you a great nation. (Which we will talk about.)**
- 2. I will make your name great.**
- 3. I will bless all the families of the earth through you.**

Well, Abram left Ur [Refer to the interactive map.] with his father, Terah, Sarai his wife, and Lot, his nephew and traveled to Haran. They settled there. At the age of 75, God told Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." (Gen. 12:1) So Abram gathered his wife, Sarai, his brother's son, Lot, his servants and possessions totaling about 200 people and Left Haran. They traveled to the area of Canaan. Well, when they finally arrived in the land of Canaan in the area of Shechem and Bethel, Abram is ready to let the blessings begin. BUT instead of blessings God sends a famine (lack of food). (What a way to thank a fellow who has traveled so far because he is obeying you !) The famine forced the whole group to leave Canaan and go to Egypt for food.

They ran into some trouble in Egypt with the Pharaoh. The Lord had to send several plagues so that Abram, Sarai, Lot and everyone else could leave and return to the Promised Land.

Now, they return to the area of Bethel and his nephew, Lot, says to his Uncle Abram, "This land is not enough for both of us." So like a good Uncle, Abram gives Lot his pick. Of course Lot picks the most fertile land, near Sodom and Gomorrah.

Shortly after, the area of Sodom and Gomorrah grows into a huge battle zone and Lot and all his possessions are taken. Now if I was Abram I probably would have said, serves him right, he got his just reward for taking the best land and washed my hands of him. But Abram is a righteous man and sends an army to help Lot.

Now Abram is even older, he still has his beautiful but older wife Sari, loyal servants, substantial property, power and wealth, but the Lord has still not made good on his promise to become the, "Father of Nations". You cannot become a father without children! At this point, Abram begins to question God's promise. Wouldn't you? If it was me, that probably would have happened a long time ago.

In Gen 15:5, the Father tells Abram to count the stars, "So shall be your descendants." Our Lord does answer His promise to Abram, but not until he is 100 years old and Sari is 90 years old!

How would you feel if God asked you to pack up your family and go ?

- I would feel honored.
- I'd want to know, "Why me ?"
- I would tell God, "Ask someone else."
- I'd feel

How difficult would it be ?

Have you ever waited a long time for God to answer a prayer ? _____

How can you show your faithfulness to God ?

Adults and Teens: Read from your bible:

The Second Part of the Covenant

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Abram's Name Change | [Genesis 17] |
| Visitors | [Genesis 18] |
| Promise of a Son | |



Some thoughts for the Abraham Covenant [Fr. Steve]

I. Name Change

1. Change of Abram's name to Abraham signifies that the time of fulfillment of the promises is at hand. His mission to be the father of many nations is about to begin and so his name change reflects this: Abram = exalted father Abraham = exalted father of many nations. God is finally acting to bring about this part of his promise to Abram: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said..." (Gen 17: 1); Isaac was born when Abram was 100. The name change, as said, indicates the mission given by God is about to begin. Think of a spy who receives a new identity before going on a mission and this may help you understand (a little anyway) biblical name changing.

This prepares us to understand why Jesus is given a name by God; Mary and Joseph are not free to name their child because his mission is revealed to them by God from before Jesus' conception: "...She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1: 21)

Summing up:

At the fullness of time, the time of fulfillment, the name of Jesus is revealed by God just like Abram was given a new name by God at the time of fulfillment. Both names are indicative of their respective missions. Think of Simon son of John changed to Peter (Rock) indicating his mission to be a rock solid foundation for the Church.

2. Circumcision is the sign that Abram accepts to be Abraham and the sign of his trust in God. This belonging to the covenant through circumcision allows Abraham to generate both historically and meta-historically. This is to say that there are blood descendants of Abraham and descendants according to their following his faith. Thus he and his household including his servants and slaves are all circumcised. We understand that even those who are not physically generated by Abraham are allowed to enter the covenant and so become heirs to the covenant promises – only Ishmael and Isaac are generated biologically by Abraham: "Yes both the house born slaves and those acquired with money must be circumcised. Thus my covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant." (Genesis 17: 13)

This of course prepares us to understand Jesus' claim that one belongs to the Promise thru faith and not thru a bloodline.

Summing up:

Abraham becomes the father of many nations exactly thru his being told to bring many different peoples into the covenant thru the sign of circumcision. Thus Abraham's fatherhood is really thru faith in the covenant he received and passes on to his multi-nationed household. Jesus invites all the world into the covenant thru faith in the Father's revelation in him and about him: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" Matthew 28: 19-20)

II. Abraham receives visitors sent from heaven

The visitors are representatives of heaven for they bring a message of a miraculous conception to Abraham: "The Lord appeared to Abraham...Looking up he saw three men standing near him...One of them said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son." (Genesis 18) Abraham has already received this promise but it seems impossible to him and Sarah now: "Abraham fell face down and laughed as he said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old...So Sarah laughed to herself and said, "Now that I am worn out and my husband is old, am I still to have sexual pleasure...But the Lord said to Abraham, "...Is anything to marvelous for the Lord to do? At the appointed time, about this time next year, I will return to you and Sarah will have a son." (Genesis 17 – 18)

The history of the divine visitors is recorded to show that the action could only be the work of God. This is to say that the fulfillments of the promises are beyond human ability: man cannot save himself. Jesus brings this out clearly in the Gospel: "They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." (Mark 10: 26 – 27)

The miraculous conception promised by God also foreshadows God's work in Jesus resurrection from the tomb which is our hope – almost impossible for us to believe in and perhaps we too want to laugh – for from a barren womb comes life. Impossible to us, but not to God. "Is anything too difficult for God?" Genesis 18

III. The Promise of a Son.

1. The promised son, Isaac, is not only an oath taken by God and when fulfilled will prove his trustworthiness; no, the son is a promise of Abraham's own continuation: he [Abraham] lives on in his seed, his descendant. But this is not enough and begs for a

better son so to speak – for every person wants to live forever in themselves and not only thru their descendants. The promised son is then truly fulfilled in the Son of God. Every other and any other son fails for a son takes life from the father but can never give back life to the father. But, the Son of God is different. He receives life from the Father and gives back life [us] to the Father. This mutuality of life-giving is explicit in John’s Gospel: “But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God...The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him.. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life...For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whoever he wishes...so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father...For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he gave to his Son the possession of life in himself.” (John 1: 12; 3: 35-36; 5: 21-26)

Summing up Point 1.

The promise of a son looks forward to Jesus the Promised One and Son of God. The Son of God has life in himself and can give that life to all of mankind. Isaac conceived miraculously – by the power of God – foreshadows the Incarnation of Christ. Jesus not only draws life from the Father, but is able to give back life to the Father in the salvation he brings which is our eternal living.

2. The son of Abraham, Isaac, is to be offered in sacrifice. This action is proof of Abraham’s faith. However, Abraham is not allowed to sacrifice his son, “Abraham, Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the angel.” (Genesis 22) The Son of God is the true sacrifice offered by the Father and willingly entered into by the Son. This point is not lost on us: Isaac is offered – Christ offers.

Summing up Point 2:

The promised son Isaac is the fulfillment of a promise. He is long awaited and his arrival appears impossible to his parents. However, when the time of fulfillment arrives God intervenes to realize that which for humans is impossible to realize. This Isaac foreshadows the true promised son Jesus: long awaited, miraculously conceived, who gives back life to the Father in us (something Isaac could never give.)

An aside:

Cf. The promise of a descendant to Eve who would not be subject to the Evil One. This tells us that all are foreshadows until the Sinless One arrives.

It would also be interesting to trace out other promised sons in the Old Testament, however our course today is on the Covenant with Abraham. In any case the theology remains the same more or less thus Israel will be well instructed and prepared for Jesus.

God not only wants to bless Abraham's life, but wants to bless ours as well. How has God blessed your life ?

Do we trust God and specifically trust God's timing for our lives ?

How can we trust God completely as opposed to trusting him in only certain areas of our lives ?

The Third Part of the Covenant

The Blessing and Testing of Abraham [Genesis 22: 1 - 19]

The story of the sacrifice of Isaac is considered to be one of the most artistic and moving stories in the Old Testament. Abraham's only heir was the beloved Isaac and now God was demanding the sacrifice of this child.

"Why did God test Abraham's faith?"

When did you have to make a decision to follow [be obedient to] God ?

The Story of Abraham and Sarah

Once there was a man named Abram. One day the Lord came to talk to Abram, and Abram asked, "Who will have all my things when I die".

God promised Abram and his wife Sarai that one day they would be parents, even though they were old and had no children.

God wasn't sure that Abram understood. So that night He took him outside, and said, "Do you see all the stars that are in the sky"? When Abram looked up, the whole night sky was full of stars, so many in fact that he would never be able to count them. Then God said, "That is how many children you will have".

Quite a few years later when Abram was ninety-nine years old (older than even your grandparents) the Lord decided to change Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of many." He also changed Sarai's name to Sarah.

God told them again that they would be parents and that they would have a boy. This time Abraham laughed so hard he fell on his face! It was hard to believe that he and Sarah would have a child in their old age.

One day three visitors came to Abraham's house. He hurried to meet them. "May I get you something to eat and drink?" Abraham asked. "Please come in and join us, and have a rest on the couch."

The visitors agreed, so Abraham brought them some water, fresh bread, and meat.

While the visitors were eating, they asked Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?" Abraham replied, "She is inside the tent."

Then one of the men spoke and said, "I will come back to see you at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening inside the tent. She started to laugh, but covered her mouth and laughed to herself because she didn't want to be heard. Then she said to herself, "How can I have a child, I'm almost one hundred years old?"

Later when the visitors had left, Abraham and Sarah realized that they were angels sent by God.

A year later, Sarah gave birth to a son. She and Abraham named him Isaac, which means "he laughs."

They were very excited, and remembered to thank God for Isaac.

The Three Visitors

Genesis 18

Abraham was visited by 3 strangers and he treated them to the best he had.
While he was entertaining them he realized that they were angels.
They brought him some IMPORTANT NEWS.

They told him that by this time next year
Sarah would have a son. When Sarah heard
this she _____ (Gen.18:12) to
herself because she thought she was too old
to have a baby.

Now the LORD knew her thoughts and said
"Is _____ too _____ for the
LORD?" (Gen. 18:14)



Unscramble the Letters below to fill in the answers above:

GULDAHE

TAYNGIHN

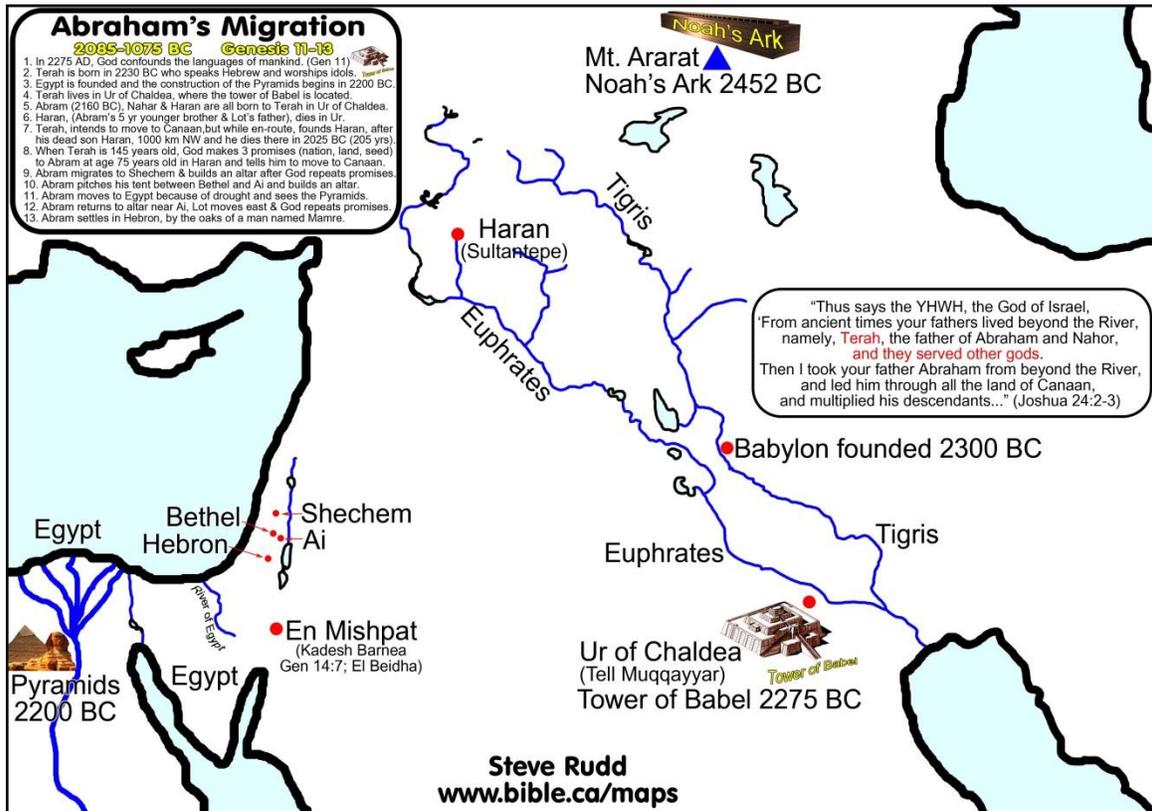
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The Call of Abram

The LORD said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land “ _____ ”

[Genesis 12:1]

God promised Abram that if he did this: “ I will make of you a _____
 _____ ... and I will _____ .



Abram went as the LORD directed him.

Abram traveled all the way from (1) _____ of the Chaldeans, to (2) _____ . He was as seventy-five years old when he left there. Abram took his wife Sarai, his brother's son Lot, all the possessions that they had accumulated ... and they set out again for _____ (3) _____ .