

The Abrahamic Covenant

In Genesis 12 God makes a three-fold promise to Abram: a chunk of land, his descendants will be a great nation, and through him all the world will be blessed. This promise is called the Abrahamic Covenant. It's repeated throughout tonight's section to each of Israel's patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The covenant was obviously important to God since He repeated it over and over. He affirmed it to Abraham in Genesis 13, 15, 17, and 22. He reaffirmed it to Abraham's son Isaac in chapter 26; and to his grandson, Jacob, in chapters 28 and 35. Obviously, God considered this Covenant extremely significant.

Actually, the Abrahamic Covenant is the bedrock of the Bible. It's the foundation for the rest of the book. In reality Genesis 12 to Revelation 22 simply fills in the details of this three-fold promise. Understand the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - and you will understand the rest of the Bible.

And here's the promise in a condensed version – just three words - *land, nation, blessing*. Or here's an even an easier way to remember it - *SOD, SEED, and SALVATION*.

Chapter 13 spotlights the SOD.

After telling Abram to survey the land God says to him in verses 14-15, *"all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever."* That should settle all the squabbles in the Middle East. *"Forever"* constitutes a pretty long-term lease. God gave the land to Israel.

In Genesis 15:18 God provides the boundaries of His gift to Abram's heirs. The land God gives to Abraham not only encompasses the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights – today's disputed territories. It includes the lion's share of Egypt, the Siani, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, and Kuwait.

About 300,000 square miles will one day belong to the nation Israel.

Chapter 17 spotlights the SEED.

In verses 19-21 God makes it clear that Isaac, not Ishmael, is the rightful heir to the covenant. God tells Abraham, *"Sarah your wife*

shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him." God promises to bless Ishmael, but he has no claim to the Covenant.

A clear grasp of chapter 17 is crucial to understanding the modern Middle East. Islam teaches that Ishmael and Isaac were co-heirs to the Covenant God made with Abraham. Thus, the land belongs to Jews and Arabs alike – but that's not what the Bible teaches. Ishmael was blessed by God, but he received no birth-right. The Abrahamic Covenant was established with Isaac, not Ishmael.

The true God is not the God of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac - as Islam suggests. The true God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—as revealed in God's inerrant Word.

Chapter 22 spotlights the SALVATION.

God calls Abraham to travel to Moriah, and offer His "only son" Isaac as a sacrifice. Two thousand years later another Father would offer His only Son as a sacrifice on that same mountain. God the Father offered His Son, Jesus, at the top of Mount Moriah, also called "Calvary".

Isaac carried the wood up the hill, and Jesus carried the cross. Two men travel with Abraham and Isaac, and two thieves witnessed Jesus' crucifixion. From Abraham's perspective Isaac died when he set out for Moriah. It was three days later, when they reached their destination, that the Lord gave Isaac back to his father. Figuratively, Isaac was resurrected.

Every aspect of Abraham's ordeal at Moriah was a picture of the future heir that would be sacrificed for the sins of the world on that very same mountain. When God promised Abraham that through his seed the nations would be blessed He was speaking of the salvation that would come through the Messiah, Abraham's future heir.

This is why the Gospels are so careful to trace Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham. Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

"Sarai" means "contentious". "Sarah" means "princess".

"Abraham" means "father of many nations".

"Haran" means "parched".

"Ishmael" means "God hears". "El Roi" means "the God who sees."

"Eliezer" means "Comforter".

"Esau" means "hairy".

"Jacob" means "heelcatcher".

"Luz" means "separation". "Bethel" means "house of God".

"Naphtali" means "my wrestling".

"Ben-Oni" means "son of my sorrow". "Benjamin" means "son of my right hand".

"Mahanaim" means "double camp".

"Jabbok" means "emptying". "Peniel" means "face of God."

"Israel" means "governed by God".

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Bible Scan - Genesis 12-38

Abraham ch12-23

Of all the Old Testament heroes Abram stands out as a man of faith. Genesis 15:6 says of Abram, “*And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*” This is a foundational statement. It’s quoted four times in the New Testament (Romans 4:3, Romans 4:22, Galatians 3:6, James 2:23).

This is the verse the Apostle Paul uses to prove we *obtain and maintain* a right standing with God - not because of what we do or don’t do - but because of our faith in God’s promise! All God’s blessings are received by faith and faith alone.

As Mark Twain once quipped, “Heaven goes by favor. If it went by merit, you would stay out, and your dog would go in.” God pours out His blessing – not on people who think they deserve it – but on folks who trust in His grace.

The faith that inherits God’s blessing is illustrated in chapter 15 by the way God seals the covenant with Abram. According to custom, Abram slaughtered a series of animals – cut them in cross-sections from head to toe – then arranged the animal halves into a corridor. The two parties entering the agreement would walk side-by-side between the animal halves as a commitment to their part of the covenant. *And you think a house-closing is a hassle. Imagine signing this type of contract!*

But here’s what happened. When Abram finished slicing up all the beef he sat down to wait on God. He expected God to literally

appear and walk with him through the animal halves. He waited all day, and into the evening hours...

Until finally, as he was nodding off, God appeared in the form of a burning torch and smoking censor - and instead of walking with Abram down the corridor – God walked it by Himself. All Abram did was wake up, and believe in God’s work.

And here’s the lesson for us. Salvation is not a tag-team effort. It’s not up to us to meet God half-way. The blessing of God is not received by God doing half the work, and the recipient doing half the work. God does all the work! He takes sole responsibility for earning the blessing. All I have to do is wake up and believe.

When we step out in our own energy and ingenuity to help God fulfill His will we only complicate matters.

Abraham’s lapse of faith caused a domestic war between Sarai and Hagar, and between Ishmael and Isaac. The hostilities that exist in the Middle East today, between Jew and Arab, are the direct result of Abram’s lack of faith, and unwillingness to wait on God’s promise.

Always remember when we try to do *God’s will our way* we will ultimately make a mess of the situation. Let’s learn to walk by faith. Let’s trust the Holy Spirit to do God’s work, God’s way, in God’s time.

Isaac ch21-26

In Genesis 24 Abraham sends out a servant to find a bride for Isaac. In Genesis 15:2 we discover the servant’s name is “*Eliezer*”, which means “*Comforter*”. Eliezer finds a virgin, named “*Rebekah*”. He woos her with gifts, and stories about life with his master, and live in his master’s house. Eliezer brings the girl home and that’s when we see Isaac. In verse 63 Isaac comes out to meet his bride.

What an awesome picture! After Jesus rose from the dead He ascended into heaven out of our sight. Since then, the Father has sent a Comforter into the world, the Holy Spirit, to search out a bride for His Son, Jesus. In the New Testament, the Church is called “*the virgin bride of Christ*”. We are the bride!

At the moment, Jesus is out of our sight. We don’t see Him. The Spirit speaks of Him, and shares His blessings. He testifies to our hearts of His power, wisdom, and love. He provides us a foretaste of the lavish blessings awaiting us when we get to our new home and live forever with the Master. The Spirit woos us to come and follow, but the next time we see Jesus is when He comes to greet His bride.

In Genesis 12, Sarai is 65 years old when Abram goes to Egypt. In Genesis 20, she’s 90, and still gorgeous. Sarai is on social security, and can still win a beauty pageant. On both occasions though, Abram doesn’t want to get *knocked off* even for a *knock out* so he lies – he calls her his sister to save his skin.

Between the two incidents there’s a period of 25 years, during which Abram grows in his faith, and knowledge of God – but apparently he never took the time to restructure his thinking toward his wife and his fears. Thus, when thrown into the same situation he responds in the exact same way.

This is what happens to believers. We enter a relationship with God, and grow spiritually - then a situation pops up that pressures us for a response, and since we’ve never retrained our minds, we revert back to the way we use to cope. We fall into the former trap because we’ve never transformed our thinking to see the circumstances from God’s perspective, and tailor a response

pleasing to Him.

Now here’s the scary truth for parents – *the apple never falls far from the tree*. Fast forward to Genesis 26, and you find Abram’s son, Isaac, repeating the same blunder with his wife. Among the Philistines, he fears for his life, so he tells them Rebekah is his sister. He married a pretty girl like his daddy, but he treats her in the same selfish way. Guys, your kids are learning from your actions...

What are the areas of your life where you still tend to act and react according to past habits and attitudes, instead of what you know to be God’s will. Write down the verses that correct that thinking. Review them often. Even write them down. Restructure your thought life according to God’s Word!

Devotion Box - Rebuilding our Thought Life

Devotion Box - Scattered or honored?

In Genesis 12:2 God promises Abram, *"I will make your name great"*.

In contrast, Genesis 11:4 reveals the heart of the people who constructed the tower of Babel. They said, *"let us make a name for ourselves..."*.

The babblers at Babel wanted to be esteemed, and God scattered them. Abram obeyed God, by faith - and God made His name great.

Often people try to build their own little kingdoms, but in the end, only God's kingdom will stand.

Build your own kingdom, and your efforts will be scattered. Cooperate with God in the building of His kingdom, and He will make your name great.

Jacob ch 25-38

Bethel was more than a pit-stop – it was the turning point in Jacob's life.

The road to Haran took him to a place named *"Luz"* which means *"separation"*. Later Jacob renames the place *"Bethel"*, or *"house of God"*. Jacob had been separated from his father's house, but at Bethel he becomes a part of God's household.

At Bethel God speaks to Jacob. He reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant, and promises him protection and blessing in the foreign land where he is headed.

Understand there were no lights in the honeymoon suite, and the brides in those days wore long, flowing veils. It's also possible Jacob could've been a little sauced from the wedding feast. That's why when Jacob rolled over the morning after the wedding he was shocked to discover his beautiful bride was actually Leah, ole' delicate eyes!

He was steamed! He had been double-

crossed – swindled out of what rightfully belonged to him. He says to Laban in verse 25, *"What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?"*

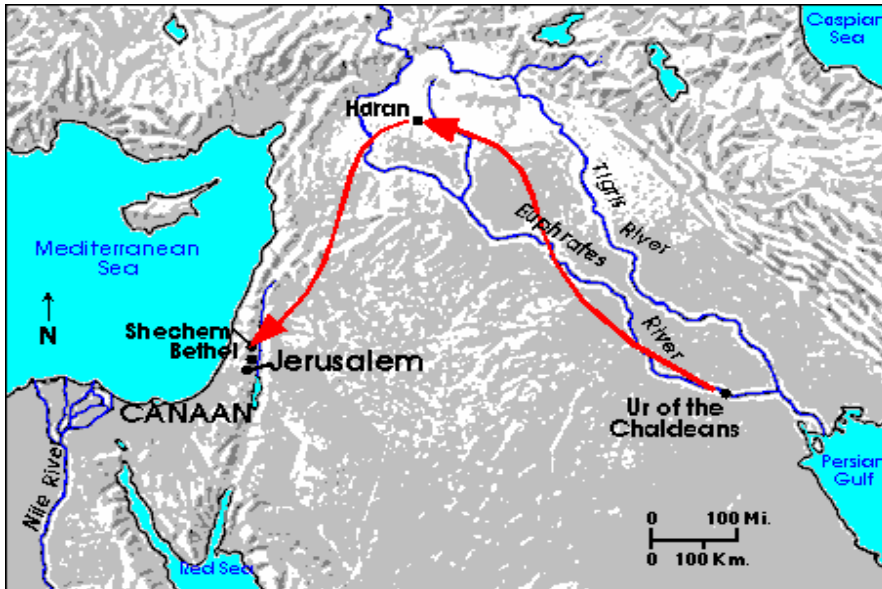
And how it must've stunned him to hear Laban's response, *"It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn."* In other words, let me teach you a lesson or two about the rights of the firstborn. Wow, talk about poetic justice. What goes around comes around.

Laban does to Jacob, exactly what Jacob did to Isaac and Esau. The swindler gets swindled.

God sends Jacob to Haran to look in a mirror called Laban! Jacob learns of God's goodness at Bethel, but he learns of his own wickedness at Haran. The whole experience humbles Jacob.

The next time at Bethel, God gives Jacob a new name, *"Israel"* which means *"governed by God"*. *Jacob the schemer, becomes governed by God.*

Map of Abraham's journey from Ur to the Promised Land



Devotion Box — Are you following God half-way?

In the beginning Abram followed God half way. He made it 600 miles of a 1000 mile journey. He stopped at Haran, which means "parched", and that describes the spiritual condition of a person with one foot in the world and one foot with the Lord. The most miserable person in the world is the believer who follows the Lord half-way.

It wasn't until Terah, Abraham's father, died that he moved the remaining 400 miles. Apparently, Terah was holding Abram back.

Here's the question for us, *what's the Terah in our lives?* What habit or allegiance or preoccupation needs to die before you and I are willing to become a fully-devoted follower of Jesus? Often faith begins with a funeral. It's only when we bury that old desire or habit that we become free to move on with God.

Throughout the story of Abraham, every where he goes, he stops and builds an altar. Abraham was one of the greatest men of God, of all time, but the only permanent structure he ever built was an altar.

Abraham could've dug wells for water, or built homes for comfort, or forts for protection – *instead he builds al-*

Devotion Box - are you an altar builder?

tars. His top priority was not sustenance, or comfort, or protection - but worship. Abram built altars to worship God.

Maybe you're building a home, or business, or fortune, or family – but as you journey through life are you building altars? Are you stopping to worship God?

Bible Scan - Genesis 12-38

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - September 12, 1999

Cafe Calvary - every Wednesday @ 7:30 pm - Bible Study this week with Pastor Randy

Ladies Bible Studies begin this week Tuesday, September 14 sign up tonight

10:00 AM - Genesis 7:00 PM - *Becoming a woman of grace?*

Appreciation Luncheon for all Green team and Clean team members

Sunday, September 19 at 1:00 PM in the fellowship hall

If you're interested in getting involved in our worship ministry see Pastor Kevin.

High School every Wednesday @ 7:30 pm - Junior High every Sunday night @ 6:30 pm.

Next Bible Scan - September 19 - Genesis 39-50

"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." - Genesis 15:6

Bible Scan Memory Verse

Bits and Pieces

Genesis 18:13 tells us, "*And the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh... Is anything too hard for the Lord?'*"

It was one of Abraham's three visitors who spoke to Sarah, but He's identified as "*the LORD*" - in the Hebrew it's "*Jehovah*". God Himself was one of the visitors who came to Abraham's tent.

This may be the incident Jesus referenced in John 8:56-57. Jesus told the Pharisees, "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*" Then the Jews said to Him, "*You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? When did Jesus see Abraham?*"

Perhaps the pre-incarnate Christ was one of Abraham's three visitors.

Martin Luther once said to his friend, Erasmus, "Your thoughts of God are too human."

Did you hear that Abraham wanted to upgrade his PC to Windows 98? Isaac said, "Pop, you can't run Windows 98 on your old slow 486. You need at least a Pentium II processor with a minimum of 64 megabytes of memory in order to multitask effectively with Windows 98!"

But Abraham, the man of faith, gazed calmly at his son, and replied, "God will provide the RAM!"

Abraham built altars. Isaac dug wells.

We actually have to wait 2000 years to understand what Jacob's ladder represents. It's finally revealed in John 1:51.

There Jesus speaks to Nathanael, and says of Himself, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*"

Who is the ladder reaching from heaven to earth? Jesus Christ!

Genesis 24:67 contains the first use in the Bible of the word "love".

If you want to know the real meaning of love open your heart to Jesus. He will show you what real love is all about!

"*Leah's eyes were delicate*" can mean she had weak eyes, or it can mean she was so ugly she made your eyes sore.

As Rachel dies giving birth to her son she names him, "*Ben-Oni*", or "*Son of my sorrow*", but Jacob changes the name to "*Benjamin*", or "*Son of my right hand*".

It's another picture of our Lord Jesus. On the cross Jesus was called the "*man of sorrows*", but after His resurrection His Father exalted Him to *His right hand*.

Marriage Builders

Genesis 25:21 tells us. "*Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.*"

Whenever I read this verse I think of Steve. He came to me concerned that he and his wife were unable to have children.

I had just this verse – how Isaac asked God to open Rebekah's womb – and I asked Steve if he had ever prayed for God to bless his wife with a child? He stuttered for a few moments, then admitted, "*No, I've asked for the Lord's will to be done, but I've never come right out and asked God to give us a child.*" I said, "*Hey, it worked for Isaac. Why don't you give it a try.*" A couple of weeks later he called to let me know his wife was pregnant. He was so excited God had heard his prayer!

Guys, God loves us, and wants to answer our prayers!

Always remember, *the only prayers God cannot answer, are the prayers that never get prayed.*