



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

#36 – God’s Covenant with Abram Genesis 15

PICTURES NEEDED

36-1 Abraham looking at stars

REVIEW (Before Teaching Lesson)

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:** (Use the visual from the last lesson to aid in review) Where did Abram live originally? What did God call him to do? What promise did God make to Abram? How did Abram show that he believed and trusted God?
- **The Big Question Review:** What was God’s promise to Abraham? Let the students give their answers to the question.
- **Bible Verse Review:** Genesis 12:2-3
Abraham was blessed by God to be a blessing to all people.

"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."

LESSON CONTENT

Note: The Bible verses included in the lesson are from the NIV 1984 edition. The wording of the questions is derived from that version. If another version of the Bible is used, questions may need to be adapted.

In the last lesson, we saw how God called Abraham and made seven promises to him.

What were seven promises God made to Abraham?

1. Make him into a great nation. (God gave him a heritage. The Jews are all descendants of Abraham as are the Arabs.)
2. Bless him. (God provided for him what was needed and more.)
3. Make his name great. (Abraham is considered the father of the Jewish faith.)
4. Make him a blessing to others. (God's revelation of truth has come through the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham.)
5. Bless those who blessed him. (God blesses those who are good to Israel.)
6. Curse those who cursed him. (God is against those who are against Israel.)
7. Bless all people on earth through him. (Salvation from Jesus came through the line of Abraham. There is no greater blessing to all the earth than what Jesus has given mankind.)

In this lesson, God appears to Abraham again, restates his promise of giving him descendants and makes a covenant with him.

What is a covenant? A covenant is a promise or pledge between two people or parties.

Genesis 15:1-6 (picture 36-1)

¹ After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

² But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

What did God say he was for Abraham when he told him not to be afraid? His shield and very great reward.

What does that mean? A shield was the symbol for a king. God was Abraham's Lord or king, his protector and the provider of all that he needed. There was no greater treasure that Abraham could have than God himself. That was important for Abraham to remember just as it is for us.

What was Abraham's response to God saying that? Abraham focused on what he didn't have, which was children. Abraham seemed to be struggling to believe the promise God had given him before as he still had no children. His focus was on what he didn't have, rather than all that he did have in God.

How did God encourage Abraham? He took him out to see the stars and declared his offspring would be uncountable, just like the number of stars.

How did Abraham respond to that? He believed God. His faith in God's promises is what made him right with God.

Genesis 15:7-21

⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

⁸ But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"

⁹ So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

What is the covenant that God made with Abraham? God said he would give the land to his descendants.

How was that covenant confirmed? Abraham laid out a sacrifice and then God sent a blazing torch to consume it.

What would happen before the promise of the land would be received? The people would be slaves for 400 years in a land not their own.

Why would the promise be delayed so long? The sin of the Amorites had not reached its full measure. God is patient and long-suffering. He was calling Abraham to be the same.

What was credited to Abraham as righteousness? Abraham believed God's promise to give him offspring and make him into a great nation even though Sarah was barren. It was because of his faith that God called him righteous. That doesn't mean he did everything right. Abraham was a sinner just as we are.

Sarah had a hard time believing God and when she didn't have a child she took matters into her own hands. Instead of waiting on God's promise to give her a baby, Sarah did what was a custom at the time; she gave her maidservant Hagar to Abraham to be his wife.

What happens when we do things out of God's order and take matters into our own hands? There are always consequences when we do things outside of God's will and way. Sarah's lack of faith caused problems both for her family and the people of Israel. When Hagar got pregnant, there was big conflict between her and Sarah. The son who was born to Hagar was named Ishmael.

The angel of the Lord said this about Ishmael. (Genesis 16:12) *He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.*" The descendants of Ishmael are the Arabs and to this day they are fighting with the Jews who are the descendants of the son who would later be born to Abraham and Sarah.

Throughout the New Testament Abraham is referred to as an example of being made righteous through faith. What does it mean to be righteous? Righteous means to be right with God.

Romans 4:20-21 says, ²⁰*Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

What does it mean to waver in unbelief? If we waver in unbelief, we don't have steadfast trust in who God is. If we are uncertain of who God is and what he is able to do, we won't trust his promises.

Why didn't Abraham waver in unbelief? The verse says that Abraham was fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he had promised. Abraham knew who God is; that he is all powerful (omnipotent) and all knowing (omniscient) and able to do anything that is within his character and will. If we have faith like Abraham, we won't be pushed around by doubts about God; we will trust him, his word and the promises he has made.

LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** What was God's promise to Abraham? How did Abraham respond to God? What did God do to show this was a lasting covenant?
- **Thought Questions:** Why does faith please God? Can we be faithful in some situations and not in others? How? What causes us to be faithful? What causes our faith to grow? Why would Abraham's faith make him righteous in God's eyes? What makes us righteous in God's eyes?
- **Prayer:** Thank God that he is all powerful and all knowing and able to keep his promises. Pray that you would remember how he has kept his promises in the past. Pray that a lack of faith on the part of others wouldn't cause you to doubt God. Thank God that through the sacrifice of Jesus for your sin you have been made right.
- **The Big Question:** Why did Abraham believe God's promise? Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.

• **Memory Verse: Romans 4:20-21**

Abraham was fully persuaded that God was able to do what he promised.

²⁰(Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.)

Question: What was God’s promise to Abraham? What does it mean to waver in unbelief? Why didn’t Abraham waver in unbelief?

ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

★ **Lesson Notes:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: God promised to make Abraham’s descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and to give them the land as an inheritance.

1. Abraham believed God and laid out a sacrifice to show he believed. God caused the sacrifice to be burned up as evidence of the promise he had made.
2. God said Abraham’s descendants would be slaves for 400 years in a land that was not their own.
3. Abraham fully believed God was able to do what he said even though he and Sarah were old.

★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the class notes and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse.

★ **Activity Page:** Word Search

Instructions: In the word search puzzle find synonyms for covenant: agreement, contract, treaty, promise, pledge, pact, commitment, obligation

<pre> +++++++O++++C +T++++++B+++++O ++C+++Y+L+++++M +++AT+I++++++M ++PARG++++++I ++EAATNEEER GAT +R+TC+N++S++++M T+I++T+O+I++++E +O++++++C M++++N N++++++O++++T +++++++R+++++ +++++++P+++++ +++++++ +++++++ PLEDGE+++++++ </pre>	<pre> (Over,Down,Direction) AGREEMENT(14,6,W) COMMITMENT(15,1,S) CONTRACT(9,9,NW) OBLIGATION(10,1,SW) PACT(3,5,SE) PLEDGE(1,15,E) PROMISE(10,12,N) TREATY(1,8,NE) </pre>
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★ **Further Understanding:** Bible Study Skills

Instructions:

1. Read the whole passage below to the students as they read along in their Bibles.
2. Read the passage verse by verse and have the students explain each verse.
3. Have the students extract one important truth from the passage. This can be done as

an entire class or you can break into pairs or small groups.

4. Have the students answer the additional two questions: How can you apply this truth in your life? What will be the result of applying that truth?

Romans 4:18-25

¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²²This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." ²³The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

JOURNAL

The journal is passed out at the end of class for the students to complete at home. It has six readings that answer a digging deeper question. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

Digging Deeper: Journal Focus – Genesis, chapters 16-18

Reading 1: Genesis 16 Sarai doesn't trust God.

How did Sarai demonstrate that she didn't trust God? Who did she blame for her suffering when Hagar got pregnant? What was really the cause of her suffering? What did the angel say Hagar's son would be like? (Note: The Arabs are descended from Ishmael.) What was the outcome of Sarai's lack of faith?

Reading 2: Genesis 17:1-14 God makes a covenant with Abraham.

Why did God change Abram's name? What did God promise Abraham? What was to be the sign of the covenant? What is circumcision?

Reading 3: Genesis 17:15-27 God promises a son.

Why did Abraham laugh at what God said? What was Abraham to name the son Sarah would bear? What did God say about Ishmael? What showed Abraham believed God?

Reading 4: Genesis 18:1-15 Sarah laughs at the promise.

What did the Lord say to Abraham? Why did Sarah laugh? What does that say about Sarah?

Reading 5: Genesis 18:16-33 Abraham pleads with God.

What did the Lord say about Sodom and Gomorrah? What did Abraham do that was very bold? What does that show about Abraham? What was the Lord's response to Abraham?

Reading 6: Romans 4:18-25 Abraham believed God.

What was the promise to Abraham? Why would that promise have been hard for Abraham to believe? Why didn't Abraham waver in unbelief? What was the result of his faith? What does our righteousness come from?