

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM

Lesson Aim: Believe God's promises, even though they are humanly impossible to fulfill.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson and insert the following questions where they fit the lesson for class discussion.

God made a covenant with Abraham and gave him and Sarah promises that no human person could possibly fulfill, but He is the Almighty God and can do whatever He pleases and promises. "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed . . . when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11).

Why was Abram fearful? Gen 15:1

It is not known for sure, but in Genesis 14 Abram had defeated King Chedorlaomer and three other kings when he rescued Lot and other people that were captured by them from Sodom and Gomorrah. He may have been fearful about a retaliatory attack on him. The Lord God assured him that He was the Almighty and would be his shield and reward. The exceeding great reward seems to refer to the promises of a land and descendants as the dust of the earth that He had given to Abram. This word from God was sufficient to remove Abram's fear. We, too, can count on God to provide and protect us, so that we need not be afraid of what man can do to us (Heb 13:5-6).

How did Abram become righteous before God? Gen 15:5-6

Abram asked God how he could have an heir since he was childless. Would it be Eliezer, his trusted steward (15:2)? God said it would not be Eliezer, but it would be a natural-born son. Then God took him outside at night and showed him the stars in the heaven. God said that he would have descendants as many as the stars. Abram saw a multitude of stars and he believed God's promise. God took Abram's faith in His promise and counted it to him for righteousness. Likewise, when we believe God's promise to save us through Jesus' death and resurrection, it is counted to us for righteousness (Gal 3:6-9).

How did God prove to Abram that he would inherit the land of Canaan? Gen 15:7-21

God made a covenant with Abram, which could not be broken. God told Abram to get three clean animals and divide them and two birds and not divide them. The normal way for two people to make a binding covenant was walk between the sacrifices together. If one party failed to do his part, then the covenant would be void. In this case, Abram fell into a deep sleep and only God went between the sacrifices as a "smoking furnace and a burning lamp." So the covenant depended on the faithfulness of God to keep it valid. Since God is faithful, the covenant cannot be broken; it is an everlasting covenant. So it is with God's covenant of salvation with us. It is offered as an unconditional covenant, not dependent on our good works, but totally dependent on the good works of Jesus Christ. All we need to do is believe and receive God's offer and gift of salvation and it is ours!

How did Abram and Sarai fall into Satan's trap, which caused Sarai trouble? Gen 16:1-6

When Sarai thought she was too old to have a child, she decided she would have a son by Hagar, her Egyptian slave girl. She told Abram of her plan to have him sleep with her so she could obtain a child by her slave. This was the way the world solved this problem, but it was not the plan that God had in mind. Sarai's plan resulted in problems for her when Hagar conceived because she despised Sarai who could not have a child. That was a disgrace for any woman in that culture. As a result, Sarai treated Hagar harshly and Hagar fled from her. The angel of the Lord (God's Son) found her by a well and told her to return and submit to her mistress. She would have a son and be blessed with seed that could not be counted. She obeyed him and lived in Abraham's home for another 14 years. God was gracious to her since she was not responsible for Sarai's miscalculated "solution" to her problem. Like all worldly solutions, they caused problems for Sarai, for Abraham and for his seed through Isaac up to the present day. Now some of Hagar's seed attack Isaac's seed (Israel) and try to remove them from the face of the earth. We must not use the world's ways to solve our problems. Trust God for good solutions.

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Why did the LORD use God as His name in Genesis 17? Compare Gen15; 1 with 17:1

LORD (Jehovah or Yahweh) means the self-existing One, the I AM, Who reveals Who He is and what He does for those that He has created. In Genesis 15-16, the LORD was revealing His grace and salvation to Abram and Sarai, and even to Hagar. He gave Abram the promise of protection from his enemies and promised to give Abram Canaan and many descendants. Since Sarai was his wife, she was included in these promises. The angel of the Lord (pre-incarnate Christ) found Hagar and told her that she would have a son and his descendants would be innumerable. Count the ways that the LORD has been gracious to you in saving you from hell and promising a marvelous future with Him.

God ("Elohim") speaks of His strength and power. He is Almighty God. In Genesis 17, God tells Abram ("exalted father") more about his descendants. He changes his name to Abraham ("father of a multitude"), because he was going to be the father of many nations. Kings would be among his descendants and He would make an everlasting covenant with them to possess Canaan (Gen 17:1-8) It would take His strength to accomplish this for Abraham. As for Sarai ("quarrelsome"), she would be the mother of a son and of nations and kings would come out of her, so God changed her name to Sarah ("princess"). It would take His mighty power to give her a son when she was 90 years old. Count the ways God has shown His power in your life in answering your prayers.

What was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham? Gen 17:10-14

The sign of this covenant was the circumcision of all males. If a male was not circumcised, he was cut off from the covenant. Circumcision did not save a person. Abraham believed God and was counted righteous because he believed God's promise (Rom 4:9-12). This happened before he was circumcised. However, many Israelites were circumcised but their works proved that they were not righteous, even among the religious leaders in the days of Jesus. He told Nicodemus, the most highly regarded teacher of the Law in Jerusalem, that he needed to be born again of the Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:3, 5, .7). This proves that covenant theology is wrong when it says that baptism replaces circumcision and teaches a person needs to be "baptized" to be saved. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs of the New Covenant. They are not a means of salvation. Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, not a means of his salvation. The Sabbath is a sign of the covenant God made with Moses. The rainbow was the sign of the covenant that God made with Noah. Signs are important to God and need to be carefully observed as a means of teaching truth, but they were never given for the purpose of saving a lost soul.