



CORE STUDY #4

God Covenanted with Abraham

Passage: Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21

Themes: God's promises to his people, responding to God's call, courage and obedience, God's original blessing on all humankind (Genesis 1:28) is restored and fulfilled through Abram and his offspring.

Summary: Previously, Abram's family had resided in Ur, a highly civilized city with running water and a developed banking system. From there they moved to Haran where the LORD promises to bless Abram and his descendants, and tells him to leave Haran. Abram obeys and takes his family and belongings with him to the land of Canaan (what encompasses the modern day nations of Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and parts of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt). The LORD promises to give Abram the land of Canaan and Abram builds an altar near the great tree of Moreh. From there he goes to Bethel and sets up his tent before continuing on to the Negev, a rocky desert region of southern Israel.

A famine forces Abram to move to Egypt for a brief amount of time before he returns to the Negev and accumulates a lot of wealth. Once again, he journeys with his family to Bethel to seek the LORD and parts ways with his nephew Lot because the land there could not support them. Abram goes to live near Hebron before hearing that Lot has been captured in Sodom.

Following his rescue of Lot, Abram hears the word of the LORD in a vision. God promises to make Abram's descendants as numerous as the stars, and Abram believes. God asks for sacrifices, and tells Abram that his descendants will be slaves but will eventually be freed and come out of slavery with great possessions. God promises Abram that he will live until a good old age, and makes a covenant with him to give the land between the Nile and the Euphrates to his descendants.

It is crucial to take note of the covenant made here between God and Abram. God promised Abram the gift of seed and the gift of land. These serve as the basis for the next two covenants of the gift of law and kingship. Keep note of the themes of seed and land throughout your reading of Genesis.

Introductory Question:

- If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you go? Where would be the last place you would want to go - somewhere you wouldn't want to live?



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Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):

1. What commands and promises does God give Abram in Genesis 12? What about in Genesis 15?
2. Do you think the command given in Genesis 12 was difficult for Abram to believe and obey? Why or why not? *Things to consider: Abram's age, the size of his family and household, and no set final destination.*
3. How do you think Abram's decision to trust and obey God in leaving Haran affected his relationships with his family, his friends, and God?
4. Why do you think that God chooses Abram as the channel through which all peoples of the earth will be blessed? What is the blessing that is passed on to all nations (Genesis 12:1-3)? *Helpful hint: take a look at Galatians 3:6-14.*
5. In Genesis 15:6, Abram is credited with righteousness because he believes the Lord. What do you think is meant by righteousness? Why do you think that the Lord blessed Abram with righteousness without requiring any sort of action on his part aside from belief - in other words, do you think belief is enough to merit righteousness? Why or why not?
6. What are the different ways that God meets with Abram (vision, dream)? Can we meet with God in these ways too?
7. What do you think is the significance of the sacrifice that God tells Abram to make in Genesis 15:9-21? *In the Old Testament, animals that were split into two pieces and offered as a sacrifice signaled the making of a covenant (a promise). Those who walked between the pieces where the blood mingled were the participants in that covenant, the ones upholding it. It was a very serious offense to break such a promise. In this passage, a smoking furnace with a blazing torch (symbolizing God - see Exodus 19:20 or Hebrews 12:29) pass between the pieces, indicating that God will be the one upholding this covenant even if Abram and his descendants will not.*

Response: (Choose one question that follows the tone your study has taken)

- What has God blessed you with? What does he want you to do with that blessing? How can you be a blessing in light of the fulfillment of the blessing that Abram is giving is the good news of Jesus Christ?
- We become righteous (like Abram) by believing that Christ's work on the cross is sufficient for us. Why do you think it is so difficult for people to believe today?