Open Bible Stories

God’s Covenant with Abraham

## 0 Introduction

### 0.1 Key Idea

The story of God’s covenant with Abraham teaches us about God’s promised plan to restore blessing to his fallen world.

### 0.2 Creedal Verse

“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” Galatians 3:29

### 0.3 Metanarrative Summary

The eternal God created all things in six days. He made a good and perfect world. He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation. But humans rebelled against God and ruined God’s creation. God set to restore his world through his promise. God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

## 1 Biblical Interpretation: Observing the Details of the Story

After reading the crafted biblical story, answer the following questions to familiarize yourself with the details of the story.

### 1.1 Observation Questions

#### 04-01

After the flood, did people follow God’s commands?

How many different languages were there in the world at that time?

Instead of spreading out over the earth, what did humans do?

#### 04-02

Why did people not follow God’s commands?

What did the people work together to do instead of spreading out over the earth?

What did God think of the tower humans were building?

#### 04-03

What did God do to cause the people to spread out all over the world?

What was the name of the city that they were building?

What does the name Babel mean?

#### 04-04

What did God tell Abram to do?

What did God promise to do for Abram?

#### 04-05

How did Abram respond to God’s command?

To which land did Abram go?

#### 04-06

What promise did God make to Abram about Canaan?

Where did Abram settle?

#### 04-07

Who was Melchizedek?

When did Abram and Melchizedek meet?

What did Melchizedek do for Abram?

What did Abram give to Melchizedek?

#### 04-08

What did God promise Abram after he had lived in Canaan for many years?

What did Abram think of God’s promise?

Why did God say Abram was righteous?

#### 04-09

How did God make his promise to Abram?

What is a covenant?

When did God make his covenant with Abram?

What did God promise to Abram in this covenant?

### 1.2 Translation Questions

Use the following translation questions to understand specific details of the passage. Discuss how you might translate these specific elements of the story.

#### 04-01

**the same language** At this time, there was only one language, so they could all understand each other. How would you express **the same language** to mean all people spoke one language and could communicate with each other?

  

**gathered together** The people at this time came together and stayed close to one another. God commanded humans to spread out over the earth. How would you phrase **gathered together** to mean people came together into one area?

  

**a city** A city is a place where a lot of people live and work close together. It is a large town. What words in your language mean **a city** as in place where many people live and work in a similar area?

  

#### 04-02

**very proud** The people thought very highly about themselves. A proud person often does not admit his own faults and thinks he is better than others. He is not humble. How would you translate **very proud** to mean the people thought very highly of themselves and considered themselves to be very great?

  

**a tall tower that would reach heaven** This structure was so tall that its top would be in the sky. How would you express **a tall tower that would reach heaven** to mean a tall building that would be as high as the sky?

  

#### 04-03

**changed their language** In an instant, God miraculously gave them different languages to speak so that, suddenly, they were no longer able to understand each other. How would you express **changed their language** to mean God made the people speak in different languages?

  

**spread the people** When God changed their languages, he caused these groups of people to scatter out on the earth. Each group moved to its own area. How would you express **spread the people** to mean God caused the people to move and live in different places?

  

**confused** The name of the city was called Babel. This word in Hebrew sounds like the word for **confused**. To be **confused** means to be unable to understand what someone is saying. When God changed the languages of the people, they were unable to understand each other. What words in your language mean **confused** as in to mixed-up or unable to understand?

  

#### 04-04

**bless** To **bless** someone or something means to cause good and beneficial things to happen to the person or thing that is being **bless**ed. When God **bless**es someone, they prosper. How words in your language mean **bless** as in to cause good and beneficial things to happen?

  

**make you a great nation** God would cause Abram to have many descendants, and they would become a large and important nation or country. How would you express a great nation to mean God would cause Abram’s descendants to be a large and important people or country?

  

**will make your name great** This means that God would cause Abram to have a good reputation and be known by many people in the world. How would you translate **will make your name great** to mean God would cause Abram and his family to be well-known throughout the world and people would think well of them?

  

#### 04-05

**obeyed** To obey means to follow someone’s commands. Abram did what God told him to. What words in your language me **obeyed** as in to follow the orders or instructions of someone else?

  

**God showed him** Somehow God made it clear to Abram where he was to go. The text doesn’t tell how **God showed him**. How would you express **God showed him** to mean that God made it clear and obvious where Abram should go?

  

#### 04-06

**possess** To **possess** the land means to own the land and dwell in it. God promised to give the land to Abram and also to his descendants. He promised they would own it and dwell in it forever. How would you express **possess** to mean that they would own the land of Canaan as a place to live?

  

**settled** Abram and his family lived in the land of Canaan. To settle means to stay in a place where one lives. What words in your language mean **settled** as in to live in a place by dwelling there?

  

#### 04-07

**priest** A **priest** is someone God has chosen to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of God’s people. Priests also offered regular prayers to God on behalf of his people and performed other religious rites. What words in your language would you use for a **priest** as a person God has chosen to offer sacrifices? What does a **priest** do in your culture? How similar is this term to the biblical idea of a **priest**?

  

**God Most High** The people of Canaan worshiped many false gods. The title Most High God explains that the God that Melchizedek worshiped was far superior to all of them, and was the same God that Abram worshiped. How would you express **God Most High** to mean the one and only supreme God who is superior to all?

  

#### 04-08

**promised** To promise means to say something that is guaranteed to happen. God gave an oath that he would never destroy the earth with a flood again. How would you translate **promised** to mean God said something that he guaranteed would happen?

  

**as the stars in the sky** This expression means that Abram’s descendants will be so many that no one can count them all. How would you express **as the stars in the sky** to mean Abram’s descendants would be so many that they could not be counted?

  

**believed** To believe means to accept or trust that it is true. What words in your language mean **believed** as in to trust or accept that something is true?

  

**God declared that** Abram was righteous God said that Abram was right and acceptable to God. This did not mean that Abram was sinless. Instead, it means that God said that Abram was upright because he believed in God. How would you express **God declared that** Abram was righteous to mean that God said that Abram was upright and acceptable to God?

  

#### 04-09

**covenant** God had already said he would give Canaan to Abram’s descendants (cf. 04:06). Now God stated the same thing again to Abram as an official promise. A **covenant** is a formal agreement between two parties which makes a promise official. What words in your language mean **covenant** as in a formal, binding agreement between two parties that one or both parties must fulfill?

  

**from your own body** With his own body, Abram would cause his wife to become pregnant, so that, together, they would have their own, natural son. This was an amazing promise, since Abram and Sarai were very old. How would you express **from your own body** to mean Abram would have a son of his very own by his wife becoming pregnant?

  

## 2 Theological Dialogue: Discussing the Meaning of the Story

Take time to explore the meaning of this story together as a community. Use the following discussions as a way to grasp what truth the story teaches.

### 2.1 Discourse Questions

##### At this point in human history, what were human beings like? (04-01, 04-02, 04-03)

##### How did God plan to restore his world? What promises did God give to Abram? (04-04, 04-05, 04-06, 04-08)

##### How did Abram respond to God’s promise? (04-04, 04-05, 04-06, 04-07, 04-08, 04-09)

### 2.2 Theological Questions

Answer the following theology questions as a community. Discuss what truths this story teaches.

1. How are humans sinful and disobedient of God? What are ways this story shows us ways in which people are sinful?
2. How much can we trust God’s promises? What kinds of promises does God give in this story that teaches us about God’s promises?
3. What does it mean to believe (or trust) in God’s promises? What does Abram teach us about the nature of faith?

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## 3 Personal Reflection: Following the Teaching of the Story

Take a moment to allow this story to evaluate your own life and to consider how God would have you respond. After this reflection, use the quality checking questions to check your translation draft among the translation team.

### 3.1 Journal Reflection

Prayerfully think about the following personal reflection questions. Write/Record your answers and/or discuss them as a group.

1. How can you see pride and disobedience in your own life?
2. How hard do you think it would be to follow God’s command to Abram? Why is it hard to trust God’s promises?
3. Have you put your trust in God’s promises? How do you know?

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