



Introduction

About ABC

Mission

Answers Bible Curriculum was developed to present the gospel, beginning in Genesis, to all generations; to train believers to know, obey, and defend God's Word; and to encourage believers to become conformed to the image of Christ.

Overview

The 2009 book *Already Gone* by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer (and the scientific study on which the book is based) reveals the reasons why young people are leaving the church. In much of the teaching today in our churches, the Bible is disconnected from the real world, and the authority of Scripture is undermined and replaced with secular reasoning using man's ideas.

The church has failed to teach the Bible as relevant fact. We have, intentionally or unintentionally, taught the Scriptures as nothing but "stories" that relate to spiritual matters and have avoided engaging the challenging questions from the secular world that bombard church children and adults the other 166 hours of their week. As a result, children are beginning to doubt the Bible—and the gospel message that it presents—as early as elementary school. Many studies confirm that more than 60 percent of young people leave the church after they graduate from high school.

Answers Bible Curriculum was designed and written to provide answers to the questions and issues that confront youth (and adults) in school, in the media, from friends, at work, etc. It is our hope and prayer that God will be pleased to use this curriculum to instill a lifelong trust in the Bible and in the God who authored it.

Guiding Principles

Certain principles guided our writers, editors, and reviewers as we developed Answers Bible Curriculum. These principles are reflected in the teaching, activities, and illustrations presented throughout the curriculum.

We can trust all of God's Word, beginning in Genesis.

- God's Word is true; God does not lie.
- The historical record of the Bible is confirmed often by historical, archaeological, and scientific support.

God's attributes are displayed throughout the Bible.

- God's sovereignty is demonstrated in history as he fulfills his purposes through people and events.
- God's attributes (including his holiness, justice, love, and mercy) are demonstrated through his dealings with people.

The Bible presents true history.

- The Bible presents real history, showing the unfolding plan of God to redeem a people for himself.
- The historical accounts of the Bible intersect with secular history.

We must carefully and accurately interpret the Bible.

- The proper use of hermeneutics helps us understand the Bible accurately.
- Understanding the Bible requires time and effort.

God's plan of redemption is woven throughout Scripture.

- God's plan of redemption is presented throughout the Bible, beginning in Genesis.
- Many accounts in the Old Testament connect to the New Testament and point to Jesus and the gospel message.

We must be ready to give a defense for what we believe.

- Students and adults must be equipped with answers to questions skeptics ask.
- We can use science, history, archaeology, etc. to confirm the accuracy of the biblical record.

We are to live in light of what the Bible teaches.

- God's Word is applicable today.
- We can learn from scriptural examples of obedience (and disobedience) to God's Word.
- Believers are called to walk in obedience to God's Word.

Bible Version

Answers Bible Curriculum uses the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

Scope & Sequence

Answers Bible Curriculum is a 200-lesson curriculum that covers the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, in chronological fashion. The first 120 lessons survey the Old Testament, and the final 80 lessons survey the New Testament. Where appropriate, lessons include apologetics material confirming the accuracy of the biblical record, as well as historical background and life application.

Summary

- 200-lesson, four-year curriculum (50 lessons per year); but take as long as you need to get through it.
- Available in six age levels: Pre-K-1, Grades 2-3, Grades 4-5, Middle School, High School, Adult.
- Chronological Bible teaching for all levels.
- Synchronized lessons—all ages study the same Scriptures each week.
- Based on the ESV.

How to Use ABC

Teacher Kit Components

Answers Bible Curriculum includes all the elements needed for you to teach your students with excellence while engaging them in the learning process. Each unit of lessons includes the following items:

Teacher Guide—Ten lessons with lesson overview, background material, preparation instructions, scripted lesson, activity instructions, etc. The tenth lesson of each unit is a review lesson.

Student Guide—One approximately 60-page book for students with lesson background material, space for taking notes in class, and application questions.

Classroom Posters—These large classroom posters enhance the lessons and provide visual reminders of important truths. The posters for this unit include:

Attributes of God

History of Genesis Timeline

Optional, but highly recommended for students and integrated into the lessons, is the *Seven C's of History Timeline*. This large wall chart covers biblical and historical events from Creation (4004 BC) to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. It follows the chronology of Archbishop James Ussher and helps students to understand the flow of history and to see how biblical events fit with secular events.

Teacher Digital Resources

When you purchased Answers Bible Curriculum, you received access to a digital library that contains items such as activity instructions, lesson illustrations, video clips, and PowerPoint presentations. These may be accessed at MyAnswers.com/abc-resources using the Resources Code inside the back cover of this Teacher Guide. Be sure to leave enough time to look at the Lesson Preparation section of the lesson so that any needed items can be printed or gathered prior to class.

You may also purchase these resources on a USB flash drive from AnswersBookstore.com or by calling 800-778-3390.

Teacher Guide

We have designed the lessons so that they are easy to teach and provide everything needed to successfully guide your students in understanding the Bible and knowing God—the author of the Bible. Here is a breakdown of what is included in each lesson and how to get the most out of it.

Lesson Overview

Lesson Focus—Each lesson includes a short statement with the main theme of the lesson for that week.

Key Passages—These are the Bible passages that will be studied in the lesson. Your teaching will be more rewarding if you familiarize yourself with the key passages before class.

Objectives—Each lesson teaches specific learning objectives. These are what we expect the students will understand by the end of the lesson.

Memory Verse—Students will work on memorizing two passages per unit. Our hope is that this will enable the students to really learn these Scriptures—to hide them in their hearts—and to know them well enough that they will be able to recite them from memory not only at the end of the unit but also at the end of the year!

Lesson Preparation

This chart shows you everything you need to do to prepare for each week's lesson and the materials needed. Be sure to consult this several days before class so that you can choose optional videos, gather supplies, and print necessary materials from the Teacher Digital Resources.

A Note to Teachers—Some lessons include a note from the author of the lesson. This note is intended to encourage you and challenge you

as you prepare for the lesson and pray for your students.

Optional Supplements—Many of the lessons include optional in-class activities, video clips, and/or a PowerPoint presentation. These should be previewed and then incorporated into the lesson where appropriate. Slide numbers provided in the lessons pertain to the PowerPoint presentations. These items can be found in the Teacher Digital Resources.

Prepare to Share

We have provided background information to help you understand the biblical and historical context of the passage being studied. Where appropriate, we have also included apologetic information that will confirm the truth of the Scriptures.

Lesson Elements

The lessons are broken down into several elements to make it easier for you to teach and to allow for flexibility. We realize that some teachers have the luxury of a full hour (or more!) for Sunday school, while others may have only 20 minutes of teaching time. We have planned our lessons to take about 45–50 minutes to teach. Of course, this will vary greatly depending on your class size, student maturity level, etc.

Come On In—The Come On In is usually a question for the students to start thinking about or for you to discuss with those who get to class early.

Studying God’s Word—This is the main teaching part of the lesson and includes the introduction, Bible study, and application. The lesson is written in a Say–Ask format. Inexperienced teachers or substitutes will easily be able to step in and teach the lesson by following the script, while experienced teachers will want to

become familiar with the content and “make it their own.” Throughout the lesson, you will see margin notes with teacher tips, definitions, and other lesson elements. These are included to assist you in planning and teaching the lesson.

Most lessons include an activity that is either done in small groups or individually. It may be a Bible study or a group discussion.

Going Deeper—Teach this section of the lesson if you have a group of mature students—committed believers who want to become better followers of Christ. The Scriptures and applications in this section might not be appropriate for seekers or those more on the fringes of the faith.

Group Prayer Time—We encourage you to pray with your students before they are dismissed. Use the prayer points as a springboard for your own prayers that are appropriate for your class. If time allows, you may want to take prayer requests from your students at this time.

It is our prayer that these lessons will encourage you, challenge you, and enable you to teach God’s Word effectively, and that your students will develop a lifelong faith, founded on God’s holy Word, so that their lives will demonstrate a deep trust in Christ and reflect his character. To God be the glory!

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Unit 4 Syllabus

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Lesson 31 | One Race: the Human Race | Genesis 10:1–32; Acts 17:24–28; Genesis 3:20; 1 Samuel 16:7; Revelation 5:9 |
| Lesson 32 | Job’s Suffering | Job 1:1–2:10, 31:5, 38:1–7, 40:3–5, 42:1–6; James 5:11; Romans 8:28–30 |
| Lesson 33 | God Calls Abram | Genesis 11:27–12:9; Hebrews 11:8–16 |
| Lesson 34 | Abram and Lot | Genesis 13:1–18, 14:12–24; 2 Samuel 18:18; Hebrews 7:1–4 |
| Lesson 35 | Sodom and Gomorrah | Genesis 18:1–33, 19:1–29 |
| Lesson 36 | God’s Covenant with Abram | Genesis 15:1–21, 16:1–16 |
| Lesson 37 | Isaac: Child of Promise | Genesis 17:1–27, 21:1–21; Galatians 3:16 |
| Lesson 38 | Abraham’s Test | Genesis 22:1–19; Hebrews 11:17–19 |
| Lesson 39 | A Bride for Isaac | Genesis 24:1–14, 24:50–67 |
| Lesson 40 | Unit Review | |



One Race: the Human Race

All people are descendants of Adam and Eve.

Lesson Focus

After Babel, people spread throughout the world. They may have moved into caves to survive. Different characteristics arose in different people groups, but all people are of one race—from one blood—descendants of Adam and Eve.

Key Passages

Genesis 10:1–32; Acts 17:24–28; Genesis 3:20; 1 Samuel 16:7; Revelation 5:9

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that all people are descendants of Adam and are of one blood.
- Explain, in general, how the different people groups came to be.
- Describe the connection between cavemen and the tower of Babel.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 11:1 & 6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . . And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “Who in this room is your relative?”



Studying God’s Word

Print one Grandsons of Noah worksheet for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

For the Mapping the Nations activity, print the worksheet and the Table of Nations image from the Teacher Digital Resources.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 31*.

Optional Supplements

Video Clips

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- All One Race (7:18)
- Babel and the Human Race (9:43)
- Cavemen: Fact or Fiction (8:07)
- Evolution and Racism (6:35)
- Races (3:45)
- Teaching about the Human Race—Teacher Prep (7:41)

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Where did the “races” come from? The Bible refers to all of us as being from one man (Acts 17:26). God makes it abundantly clear that all humans are related, descendants of the first man, Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), who was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27). After the judgment of the flood, about 4,300 years ago, only Noah and his family remained, and the Bible tells us that from Noah’s three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—the world was repopulated (Genesis 9:18–19). But due to man’s disobedience, God’s judgment came once again at the tower of Babel where he confused their language and caused them to disperse (Genesis 11:7–8).

According to God’s Word, we are all related (Acts 17:26), we are all created in God’s image (Genesis

1:26), and we are all sinners in need of salvation (Romans 3:23). This should convince us that God’s plan was to promote unity among the human race—not an attitude of prejudice or racism, which a belief in many races might support.

Jesus instructed us to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39), and God tells us that “the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Love is indeed God’s intention. We should avoid judging others because of their outward appearance, their ethnic features, or their disabilities. This is a biblical principle we must model and teach to our children from an early age. We are all one race—the human race. Our recognition of this fact will help to eliminate the prejudice and racism that permeates much of our culture today.

Historical/Apologetics Background

It is because of what happened at Babel that the world doesn’t have a common language. We know of over 6,900 spoken languages in the world today. Yet it is likely that fewer than 100 languages emerged from the tower of Babel when God instantaneously confused the language. The languages that resulted from Babel are what we call “root” languages, or language families. These root languages would have changed rapidly as they borrowed from other languages, developed new terms and phrases, and lost words. The biblical account of Babel occurred just as it is recorded. People of one common language developed into people of thousands of languages—because of their disobedience and pride.

The most controversy surrounding the tower of Babel arises around the idea that we are all one race—the human race. Because major differences in appearance—such as skin color, hair, and eye shape—exist among the different people groups, many people refuse to believe the biblical truth that we are all one race.

Since skin color is such an obvious difference, let’s look at that. The truth is, we all have the same basic skin pigment, melanin, just more or less of it. Lots of pigment is called “black,” and a little pigment is called “white.” We are all merely a combination

of these two pigments—black and white—creating differing shades of one basic color, brown.

The study of DNA and genetic makeup conducted by the Human Genome Project supports the biblical teaching that there is only *one* biological race of humans. The study determined that the differences in us that we perceive as so dramatic are a result of only a small fraction of our genes. In other words, we are all extremely similar in our genetic makeup. And what about those things that make us look different? They are very insignificant when put into perspective. Again, the biblical principle is to love our neighbor as ourselves and to follow the Lord’s example of disregarding the outward appearance and instead looking at the heart.

Let’s take a look at some of the historical significance of the tower of Babel. First of all, we know according to Scripture that the flood was about 4,300 years ago—in about 2350 BC—and that everything on the face of the earth was destroyed. The dispersion of the people at the tower of Babel marked the beginning of the spreading of civilization over the entire world, beginning around 2240 BC (when people scattered from Babel). Consequently, when we study ancient history, we need to remember that

evidences of civilization that are found have to be dated after 2240 BC.

Another historical consideration in our discussion of God's judgment and dispersion of the people at Babel centers on what we hear about "primitive cavemen." These cavemen are often presented as animal-like by evolutionists to legitimize the ape-to-man development theory. They are often described as having lived thousands of years before civilizations like Egypt or Babylon. However, we know according to Scripture that they were the people God dispersed from Babel. They were not primitive but extremely skilled—skilled enough to be building cities (Genesis 4:17), raising and caring for livestock (Genesis 4:20), playing musical instruments (Gen-

esis 4:21), and working in various metals (Genesis 4:22), even before the flood.

Although as a community they were skilled in many areas, once they were scattered, their survival depended on their individual skills alone. This may have resulted in some of the groups resorting to more primitive ways of surviving—they just didn't have all the skills they needed. And the fact that they made their homes in caves proved their intelligence, as caves would provide protection and shelter from the weather, animals, or enemies. These so-called "primitive cavemen" were no such thing. They were intelligent people making up intelligent families. They were not subhuman, but descendants of Adam and Eve just as we are, created in God's image.



Studying God's Word

Introduction

In the lesson before our review, we took our first look at the events described in the Bible's account of the tower of Babel.

- ? **Who can remember what some of the key ideas from the lesson were?** *God judged the people's sin by confusing their language. As the people scattered, they built ziggurats across the globe. God demonstrated his power and his justice over his creatures, and the different people groups that we see around the world today are the result of God's judgment. This was the fourth C of the Seven C's of History—Confusion.*

Slides #1–3

- Write on the board, “Who in this room is your relative?”

The Peoples Divided

Today, we are going to expand on some of the ideas we touched on last week. We are going to go back to Genesis 10 and look at the origin of all of the groups of people we see today. We will reaffirm the truth that all humans are created in the image of God and descended from Adam. This allows us to explain the different physical characteristics we see across the globe from a biblical perspective. And we'll even take a look at cavemen and how to understand them in light of Scripture.

Genesis 10:1–5

Let's read Genesis 10:1–5 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

As we work through these genealogies, we are going to note on this worksheet the first two generations after Noah, so fill them in to help keep track of things. We will be hearing many more names than we will record. *Give each student a Grandsons of Noah worksheet.*

- ? **Who are the three sons of Noah?** *Shem, Ham, and Japheth.*
- ? **What switch happens in verse 2?** *The focus moves to the sons of Japheth—Noah's grandsons.*
- ? **Who are the sons of Japheth?** *Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. Record them on the worksheet.*
- ? **Are there any names that you recognize in the list of descendants?** *Some may recognize Ashkenaz, namesake of the Ashkenazi Jews; Tarshish is where Jonah was headed (probably in Spain); others.*
- ? **To where were these various groups scattered?** *The coastlands is the general description given.*
- ? **What was the division based on?** *They were divided into their nations according to families and languages.*

Slides #4–5

- If your time is limited, consider reading the first few verses that describe the three sons and their children and then jumping to the last verse to see the division of the languages

Discover the Truth

Genesis 10:5 says that the people were divided by their language and their families.

 Slide #6

- ? How does Genesis 10:32–11:1 help us understand the details of 10:5? *Verse 5 cannot mean that the groups originally had different languages but that the languages were part of their division into nations. Without reading on to chapter 11, someone might mistakenly think that the languages were present among the different families before the division rather than as part of the division.*
- ? Does this passage explain why or how there was a division? *No.*
- ? What was the reason for the division of the nations? *They had sinned against God by exalting themselves (Genesis 11:1–9) and disobeying him by refusing to spread across the earth.*

Spreading Around the World

Now let's continue reading Genesis 10.

Genesis 10:6–20

- ? Who wants to read verses 6–20? *Have someone read the passage aloud.*
Remember to fill in the sons and grandsons of Noah on your worksheet.
- ? Who are the four sons of Ham? *Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. Record them on the worksheet.*
- ? Where did Cush's son Nimrod settle? *In Shinar and Assyria.*
- ? What cities did he found? *Babel, Erech, Accad, Calneh, Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen.*
- ? From which grandson of Noah did the Philistines come? *Egypt.*
- ? What areas did the descendants of Canaan settle in? *From Sidon to Gaza along the Mediterranean coast and westward to Sodom.*
- ? What names do you recognize from the long list of Ham's descendants? *Many of the names that appear are found in the list of the Canaanite clans later in Scripture and should be familiar to many students.*

Discover the Truth

Modern Egypt is where the descendants of Ham's son, Egypt, settled. Put's descendants settled in Libya, the Cushites in Ethiopia, and Canaan along the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Some of these names are still in use today—Egypt, of course. And in some languages, the Ethiopians are referred to as Cushites. In Hebrew, Cush means black or dark.

 Slides #7–10

- ? How does verse 20 compare to verse 6? *The same basic formula is given as the people are divided into their lands by languages.*
- ? In what general direction from the tower of Babel did the descendants of Ham spread? *If they went toward the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt, they headed west and south from Shinar.*

Divided into Nations

Let's finish reading the rest of Genesis 10.

Genesis 10:21–32

- ? Who will read verses 21–32? *Have someone read the passage aloud.*
Remember to fill in the sons and grandsons of Noah on your worksheet.
- ? Who are the sons of Shem? *Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. Record them on the worksheet.*
- ? What name appears in the middle of verse 21? *Eber.*
- ? What is the relationship between Eber and Shem? *Eber is Shem's great-grandson.*
- ? What additional information are we given about Eber? *His son Peleg was born when "the earth was divided."*
- ? What is the phrase "the earth was divided" refer to? *In the context, this refers to the division of the languages/nations at the judgment of Babel. Some students may have heard that the continents were divided during Peleg's life, but that separation had already happened during the flood.*
- ? What areas did the descendants of Joktan settle? *From Mesha (on the Gulf of Aqaba) to Sephar (in the Arabian Peninsula).*
- ? Where was Japheth in the family birth order? *He was the eldest son.*
- ? What phrasing do we see that is common to the first two sons? *They were divided by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.*
- ? According to verse 32, what happened to all of the families listed in verses 1–31? *They were divided into various nations after the flood.*

 Slides #11–14

Discover the Truth

I bet you are starting to see a pattern in the text. Here we have basically the same format that was given for the other two sons.

- ? Based on the information about Shem's descendants, how many generations passed between the flood and the events at Babel? *Shem to Peleg includes five generations.*

Let's look down the page to Genesis 11:10–17. This is another genealogy of Shem that includes dates (sometimes called a *chronogenealogy*). If we

 Slides #15–17

look at the dates, we can add them up and find out how long after the flood Peleg lived. We only need to look at the ages when each son was born and add those together, just like we did earlier in the lesson on the biblical age of the earth.

Arpachshad was born two years after the flood (v. 10); Shelah was born when Arpachshad was 35 (v. 12); Eber was born when Shelah was thirty (v. 14); and Peleg was born when Eber was thirty-four (v. 16). Adding those ages up, we come to 101. We also know that Peleg lived to 239, so we have a range for the date of Babel. Bishop Ussher placed the date at 2242 BC, when Peleg was five, though we cannot be exact based on the limited details in Scripture. *Point out the flood and the tower of Babel on the History of Genesis Timeline.*

- ? In light of all of these names, and knowing that the people were scattered by their families, about how many different language groups were formed at Babel? *Somewhere around seventy different nations would have been formed and scattered across the globe.*

Next, let's think about where some of these groups went and map it out.

Mapping the Nations Activity

Pass out a Mapping the Nations worksheet to each student. Have them work in small groups to look up the passages and identify three of the grandsons of Noah and their fathers from the clues and passages. Once they have found the answers, show the images that give the answers to the questions.

Now that you have answered the questions, let's examine this idea a little closer and make a few more connections.

Connect to the Truth


Let's compare your conclusions to this map. *Show the Mapping the Nations answer key and where each grandson settled.*

At least a portion of Cush's descendants settled here, in modern Ethiopia. This is part of the line of Ham.

Elam's descendants, part of the line of Shem, headed east, and some settled in an area of what is southern Iran today. They became known as the Persians, but we also see the name Elamites in the Old Testament.

Madai gave rise to the Medes, a variation of his name. These sons of Japheth settled near the Zagros Mountains of Iran. Later, the Medes and Persians were united, as you read in Esther.

Show the Table of Nations image. Overall, this is a general representation of where the descendants of the 16 grandsons settled, though there is a bit of debate over the exact details.

 Slides #18–21

- ❓ Based on the passages that you looked up and the clues from the worksheet, is it very difficult to identify the general regions that Noah's grandsons settled? *It is fairly easy, though there are some disagreements over details.*
- ❓ How do you think the task would change if we tried to identify exactly where each of the families from Genesis 10 settled? *The task would become more difficult.*
- ❓ What factors make this task more challenging than identifying some general areas? *The amount of time that has passed, lost records, wars, and conquests have mixed the people groups, making their history hard to discern.*

As the people were spreading from Babel, they would have been traveling into new territory that had never been settled by people before them.

- ❓ What challenges might they have faced as they were migrating to these new territories? *They would have had to find food along the way, find shelter, or take their shelter as they went (tents would be ideal); they could have taken with them only what they could have carried or hauled using animals, etc. The conditions would have been similar to those of the nomadic tribes that are still present on earth today.*
- ❓ Would each family have had all of the skills that were present in the larger community at Babel? *No, the division of labor that is common in large communities would not have been as extensive. As the large group of people splintered, the skills were splintered with them.*

The families might not have had many specific skills that had been present in the community. For example, we know that some families before the flood were working with metals. As the families were divided, it is likely that the knowledge of metalworking was not available to all family groups. Each group had to make do with what was available to them as they were traveling or use what they had been able to bring with them. Eventually, the technology to make metals could have been learned or shared among groups.

- ❓ If you were forced to travel to another area on foot, would you have the ability to survive along your journey by using materials available in the environment? *Certain people would be more able than others. Discuss the various challenges you would face if you had to move 500 miles in a specific direction.*
- ❓ What would you use if you needed to hammer on something? *You would probably find a rock that could be held in your hand or a solid stick.*
- ❓ Does this mean you are stupid or unsophisticated? *No, it just means you are making use of what is available at the time.*

This is often the stereotype of people who used stone tools. Scientists often describe this time as the "Stone Age," and the people as unsophisticated, without culture, and relatively unintelligent. From a biblical perspective, we might better understand these people as

those who were spreading out after Babel and making use of what was available. The artifacts that we find must have been left after the flood, or we wouldn't be able to find them in layers so close to the surface of the earth.

- ? What kind of shelter do you think these people might have used? *They likely used tents or sought shelter in caves. Unless they were intending to stay in a particular area, they probably didn't build elaborate structures.*
- ? In light of that thought, how might we explain "cavemen" from a biblical perspective? *These were simply people who were living in caves for shelter, some temporarily as they traveled, and others for permanent shelter. Eventually they established cities and began building structures.*

So when you hear people describing cavemen as unsophisticated, ancient people who evolved into modern humans, you can now give a biblical explanation for the existence of cavemen. In fact, people all over the world today live in caves and structures carved into rock. Now, technology certainly advances as people share information and cooperate, but that takes time. After the dispersion at Babel, we see cultures gaining technology and accumulating new information, but this doesn't mean they were stupid brutes before that.

 Slide #22

We Are All One Blood

We are going to look at one more passage as we wrap up the lesson today.

Acts 17:24–28

Let's read Acts 17:24–28. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? Who was speaking in this passage? *Paul (v. 16).*
- ? Where did this take place? *Looking back to verse 22, Paul was talking to the philosophers at the Areopagus (Mars Hill) in Athens (v. 15).*
- ? Who is the "he" referenced in verse 26? *God (v. 24).*
- ? From what has God made all of the nations? *One man (other translations use "one blood").*
- ? How many nations are made from one man, or one blood? *Every nation on all the face of the earth.*
- ? What has God determined for the nations? *Their allotted periods and boundaries—where they live on the earth.*
- ? Are there any figures of speech in verse 26? *"One man" or "one blood" is a figure of speech that will need to be examined. "Periods and boundaries" is a way to speak about the boundaries of nations over time.*

 Slides #23–25

Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let's talk about the main idea and identify some cross-references.

- ? How does this verse affirm that God is sovereign over the affairs of men?

He has not only made all people from one man, or one blood, but he has also appointed the times and areas where they would exist throughout history.

- ? What does the phrase “one blood” refer to? *Blood is a symbol for life throughout the Bible, and this phrase is intended to show the common relationship, being of one blood, of all humans making up all nations on the face of the earth. Today we use the idiom “blood relative” to refer to those we are directly related to within our families rather than by marriage or adoption. A “bloodline” is a family lineage, so all mankind can be traced back to one man—Adam.*

In the Greek, the word translated “nation” in this passage is *ethnos*, which is where we get our word *ethnic*. Rather than thinking about different races, it would be more biblical to refer to these as different people groups or ethnicities.

Genesis 3:20

- ? How does Genesis 3:20 affirm this idea? *Eve is referred to as the mother of all living, so all nations have come from her. Also, we can look back to the eight on the ark as more confirmation (1 Peter 3:20).*

 Slide #26

As we think about all of the different people groups (ethnic groups) that we see around the world today, they are really all part of one race—the human race. The differences that we see in facial features, hair type, skin color, hair texture, and eye shape can all be explained by the fact that families carried their traits with them to different regions of the globe.

These traits became concentrated in certain areas, and different people groups, or ethnicities, were established. Over time there has been a mixing of those traits, but all can trace their origin back to Babel, then to the ark, and ultimately to Adam and Eve.

Contrary to our popular terms, no one has white or black skin. *Hold a sheet of paper (black if you have a dark complexion or white if your complexion is light) to make this point obvious.*

The main color of our skin comes from a pigment called melanin. The difference between my skin and *(pick someone in the room with a different complexion)* is the amount of melanin stored in our skin.

 Slide #27

We could describe the shades of skin as a continuum from very dark to very light.

 Slide #28

The more melanin you have, the darker skin you have. Adam and Eve probably had a middle-brown skin tone. Some basic genetics can help us understand why this is a reasonable conclusion.

Melanin: the main pigment that gives skin a dark or light shade. Individuals with darker skin have higher concentrations.

We know that skin color is based on the genes we inherit from our parents. If your parents have light skin, you are likely to have light skin, and vice versa. If you have a parent with dark skin and the other light, you will likely have a middle brown color—you would have genes for dark skin and light skin.

- The explanation given here is a simplification of the inheritance of melanin tone, but it gives a starting point for thinking about how these traits are distributed in populations.

If Adam and Eve were a middle brown color, they could have passed the dark genes on to one child and the light genes on to another child. This allows for a variety of skin colors within their children—a large variety within one generation. If the dark-skinned descendants have children, they will be dark; and light-skinned parents will have light-skinned children.

- ? **Keeping in mind the dispersion of families from Babel, how would dark-skinned people become more common in Africa and lighter-skinned people in Europe?** *The families that settled these areas would have carried those genes to the areas they settled. Without mixing with other populations, the skin color would become fixed in those areas. Additionally, the darker skin offers a helpful advantage to those living in areas with lots of sun, acting as a defense against harmful rays which cause skin cancer and other issues.*

This gives us a very elementary start at understanding how the different people groups came to be, but one that is firmly grounded in the Bible.

Application

In the last two lessons we have looked at how the events surrounding the tower of Babel (“Confusion” of the *Seven C’s of History*) can help us explain the world we live in today. We have seen how the nations were established as the various families traveled to different regions with their new languages.

Along with them they took their genes—which are a little hard to leave behind. This helps us understand the ethnic characteristics of skin color, eye shape, and other features that we see in people groups across the globe.

We can also understand how some people could interpret the evidence they left behind as they settled new areas as proof that these people were unsophisticated “cavemen.” However, from the biblical perspective, we can see how they simply made use of the things they found in their environment—caves to take shelter in and stone tools to work and hunt with. Babel helps us understand that cavemen were real descendants of Adam and Eve, facing some real challenges in their new homes. Despite the evolutionary view, these were real, intelligent people made in the image of God just like we are.

Turn in your Bible to 1 Samuel 16. The prophet Samuel was at the house of Jesse in order to anoint the next king of Israel.

1 Samuel 16:7

 Slide #29

Listen as I read verse 7. *Read the verse.*

- ❓ **When Eliab, the eldest son, came before Samuel, Samuel said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him!” How did God respond?** *But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”*
- ❓ **How did Samuel evaluate who would make a good king?** *He was looking at the outward appearance rather than the heart of the man.*
- ❓ **How does this idea of judging based on appearances relate to our topic today?** *People often judge others because they look different from themselves. Skin color and other features often cause us to prejudge people we see or meet.*
- ❓ **Why is this type of prejudice unbiblical?** *All people have been made in the image of God and are worthy of respect, despite which people group (ethnicity) they belong to.*
- ❓ **Does God see any group of people differently with respect to their sin?** *No.*
- ❓ **How does this fact influence the way you think about sharing the hope of Christ with others?** *It should help us realize that all people need to hear the gospel—people who look like us and people who look different. We should not let any of these differences hinder our sharing the gospel.*

 Slides #30–32

Revelation 5:9

- ❓ **Someone read Revelation 5:9. Assign a reader. Where have the people worshipping Christ been redeemed from?** *From every tribe and language and people and nation.*
- ❓ **What attitudes concerning people who are different from you do you need to repent of?** *Discuss various ideas. Remind everyone of the truth of God’s forgiveness in Christ found in 1 John 2:8–10.*
- ❓ **How has your thinking about cavemen changed after the teaching today, and how do you think this might be useful as you share your faith?** *As people share their views about biblical history, this is likely to come up in discussions. Showing people that there is a reasonable explanation from a biblical perspective can help to make them more willing to hear the message of the gospel—the most important part of any conversation.*



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Pray that the Lord would use each person to share without prejudice the hope of Christ with others.
- Ask God to continue to teach the students as they study his Word this coming week.
- Thank God for the truths in his Word and how it allows us to understand the world we live in.



Job's Suffering

God is sovereign over all things, both good and bad.

Lesson Focus

The account of Job proclaims the sovereignty and omnipotence of God over all things—both good and bad. Job's faith and trust in God remained firm through much affliction. We can find comfort in knowing that if we are children of God, he works everything in our lives according to his good purpose.

Key Passages

Job 1:1–2:10, 31:5, 38:1–7, 40:3–5, 42:1–6; James 5:11; Romans 8:28–30

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that God is sovereign over every circumstance.
- Describe the faith and trust of Job.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 11:1 & 6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . . And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “Do good things happen to good people?”



Studying God's Word

For the Understanding Trials activity, use Student Guides or print the worksheet from the Teacher Digital Resources.

Optional Supplements

Video Clips

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- Our Starting Point (11:20)

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 32*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?’” (Job 1:8). Thus begins this epic account of God’s blameless servant turned over to the devices of Satan by God himself. Oh, the sovereignty of God! It is too deep for any human to grasp—yet it is the very power that upholds all things in the universe (Hebrews 1:3).

God’s sovereignty is the theme of the book of Job. The book opens with a glimpse into the relationship between God and Satan. God controls Satan and uses him to accomplish his purposes on the earth. Satan can do only what God allows him to do—and in this account, God allowed Satan to test Job (Job 1:6, 1:8, 1:12, 2:6).

Job quickly discovered through his messengers that in one day he had lost his livestock, servants, and children (Job 1:13–19). In response, Job tore his robe, shaved his head, fell to the ground, and worshipped God (Job 1:20). His worship and prayer in this desperate time provide a solid example of steadfast trust in the sovereign, almighty hand of God: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

But God was not finished with Job yet, and he permitted Satan to again afflict Job—this time in his body and health (Job 2:7). With grace that could only come from God himself, Job stood true to his Creator as he responded to his wife, who suggested Job curse God and die (Job 2:9). Job plainly understood God’s sovereignty when he asked her, “Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10).

Historical/Apologetics Background

When was the book of Job written, and who is its author? Except for the first eleven chapters of Genesis, the book of Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible. Most likely, Job himself was the original author (Job 19:23–24), writing down an account of his life after the restoration of his health and pros-

perity. He probably lived around the time of Abraham. Because there is no mention of the laws given by Moses or even of Israel, it is believed he lived before Jacob, although some chronologists place Job around the time of Joseph.

Job’s friends approached to comfort him, but they only served to confound him with their accusations that it was because of his iniquity against God that he was suffering in this way (Job 4:7–8). They insisted that if Job would only repent of his sins, God would remove his suffering (Job 11:13–19). But if he refused to repent and continued in his wickedness, he would die (Job 11:20).

In chapter 19, we find Job clinging in his suffering and despair to the one thing he knew for sure—that his Redeemer lives! How Job yearned for what his heart knew to be true—that he would one day behold the Redeemer God with his very eyes (Job 19:25–27). Within the midst of this long Old Testament book, God gives us a foreshadowing of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and the gospel of forgiveness and redemption he would provide.

Job’s suffering and the accusations of his friends continued. Finally, Job begged that the Almighty would answer him and reveal the purpose, wisdom, and reason behind his pain. In reply, the Lord asked a series of rhetorical questions—questions meant to humble Job by the demonstration of God’s power, wisdom, knowledge, and greatness (Job 38–41).

In the end, God did not intend to answer Job’s questions about the purpose of his suffering, but he meant to draw Job’s focus to himself—the sovereign Ruler, Creator, and Sustainer of the entire universe. Job learned his lesson well when he answered the Lord by saying, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2).

Our God is in control. We know that all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28), that our God is in heaven and does all that he pleases (Psalm 115:3), that he works all things according to the counsel of his will (Ephesians 1:11), and that both good and bad proceed from the mouth of the Most High (Lamentations 3:38).

Job was considered “the greatest of all the people of the east” (Job 1:3) and he “lived like a king among his troops” (Job 29:25). Job lived in the land of Uz, which is believed to be the land of Edom (see Lamentations 4:21). Uz, who perhaps settled there first, was a grandson of Shem (Genesis 10:22–23).

Throughout this account, Job continued to argue his innocence, and his friends continued to tell him he must be guilty because bad things don’t happen to good people. This is a very popular misconception even today, one that Jesus’ disciples held to, but one that Jesus flatly rejected (see John 9:1–3; Luke 13:1–5).

Many people today insist that a loving God would not let innocent people suffer. They have no concept of their own sinfulness, nor do they understand the holiness of God—that he can’t tolerate any disobedience against him. Instead, these people make a god in their imaginations to suit their own desires and reject what the Bible clearly teaches—there are no innocent people (Ecclesiastes 7:20); all of mankind has sinned (Romans 3:23); and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

But is the suffering we experience on earth the direct result of our sin? Is the suffering a manifes-

tation of God’s punishment? Scripture tells us that God disciplines his children. However, this discipline is exhibited out of the Lord’s love for us. We are not perfect, and consequently we need training from our heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:5–7). Paul also explains that our suffering may be a consequence of a sinful decision, choice, or lifestyle—God is not mocked by our rebellion; we will reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7–8); our suffering and trials often test our faith and produce patience (James 1:2); we can be humbled by affliction brought on by God (2 Corinthians 12:7); and often our trials give us the wisdom and understanding to comfort others in their troubles (2 Corinthians 1:3).

We often will not be given a clear answer as to why we are suffering—just as Job’s question was never answered by God. However, we must remember that God is our sovereign, holy, loving God, and he is able to work all things together for good for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). His desire for his children is not to necessarily make us happy—but to make us holy (1 Peter 1:15) while conforming us to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29).



Studying God's Word

Introduction

In last week's lesson, we looked at the origin of different people groups as a result of the confusion of the languages at Babel. We looked at a map of how the people had spread across the Middle East and into Asia, Africa, and Europe.

 Slides #1–5

- ? Who can briefly explain the connection between the events of Babel and cavemen? *As the people spread, they sought shelter where they could find it—and caves were a great place for that. They also made tools from materials that were available until they could establish cities and develop or acquire technologies that had been lost as the people scattered.*

➤ Write on the board, “Do good things happen to good people?”

As the people spread across the world, they carried their family traits with them and, as a result, different characteristics became concentrated in different areas.

➤ Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

- ? In light of these events described in the tower of Babel account, how many races are there on the planet, and what is your biblical support? *There is only one race—the human race. Acts 17:26 and Genesis 3:20 support this idea, as does knowing that only eight people were aboard the ark to repopulate the earth.*

Because God has created each person in his image, we should respect and value each person regardless of their ethnic characteristics. This also reminds us that individuals from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people are guilty because of the sin inherited from Adam and are in need of the Savior. That is why it is so critical that we share the gospel with all people so that they might avoid the penalty for their sin and can bring worship to the Lamb who is worthy of praise (Revelation 5).

Today, we are going to look at a descendant of Shem by the name of Job. We will see in the text that Job was from the land of Uz. From Genesis 10, we know that Uz was a grandson of Shem through Aram and likely settled in a region south of the Dead Sea.

The book of Job is the oldest book of the Bible, and most scholars think that Job was the author. Based on historical clues, Job likely lived at about the same time as Abraham, around 2100 BC (though there are some who would place him a little later in history).

It may seem odd that we have jumped from the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, to Job, the eighteenth book of the Bible. But since we are looking at the biblical timeline chronologically, we are not following the order of books in the Bible. Job is positioned among the poetic or wisdom literature section along with Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. These are together in a group between the historic books (Genesis through Esther) and the Major Prophets (Isaiah through Daniel). But chronologically speaking, Job fits somewhere in the middle of the Genesis accounts.

The Trials of Job

Today we will be using a little different style of examining the text. We have a lot of ground to cover, so we are going to read a passage from Job and then make some basic observations, read another passage and make some observations, etc. We will cover Job 1:1–2:10 in five chunks, so open up your Bibles to Job, and let's begin.

Job 1:1–5

Let's read Job 1:1–5 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? How is Job described? *Blameless, upright, feared God, turned from evil.*
- ? How many children did Job have? *Ten—seven sons and three daughters.*
- ? How wealthy was Job? *He was the greatest (richest) of the people of the east. He owned 3,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke (pairs) of oxen, 500 donkeys, and a very many servants.*
- ? Why was Job presenting sacrifices? *He was afraid that his sons and daughters may have sinned against God, so he was offering on their behalf.*

Job 1:6–12

Let's read Job 1:6–12 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? Where is this scene taking place? *It occurs "before the Lord," so it is likely in the throne room of heaven.*
- ? Who are the characters? *The sons of God, Satan, and the Lord.*
- ? In verse 8, how did God describe Job? *He was God's servant; he was unique among men. He was blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.*
- ? What attribute of God is demonstrated in God's statement that there is no other person like Job on earth? *God must be omniscient (all-knowing) to make this statement.*
- ? From Satan's perspective, why did Job fear God? *Satan suggested that Job feared God only because God had blessed him and protected him and his possessions.*
- ? What did Satan expect to happen if Job's possessions are taken away? *Satan believed Job would curse God to his face.*
- ? How did God respond to Satan's proposal to test Job? *God gave Satan permission to do anything to Job except harm him personally.*


Job 1:13–22

Let's read the next part of the passage, Job 1:13–22, together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? What did the first messenger (v. 14) report to Job? *The Sabeans stole his oxen and donkeys and killed all the servants.*

 Slides #6–8

 Slides #9–12

 Slides #13–16

- ? **What did the second messenger (v. 16) report to Job?** *Fire from heaven burnt up all of the sheep and servants.*
- ? **What did the third messenger (v. 17) report to Job?** *The Chaldeans took the camels and killed all of the servants.*
- ? **What did the fourth messenger (v. 18–19) report to Job?** *A great wind blew down the house where all of his children were feasting, killing them all.*
- ? **What phrase is repeated in this passage?** *“While he was yet speaking . . .”*
- ? **How did Job respond after he heard all of these messages?** *He rose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and then worshipped God. Also, he did not sin nor charge God with wrong in his response.*
- ? **What was Job’s view of God’s role in what had just taken place?** *God had given him what he had, and God had taken it away. He did not charge God with wrong, but offered a blessing.*

Job 2:1–6

Let’s continue and read Job 2:1–6 together. Here we find another scene before God. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

 Slides #17–19

- ? **How does this passage compare to the first scene before God (1:6–8)?** *It presents the same order of events: Satan appears before God and is questioned about his actions. Then God commends Job.*
- ? **In verse 3, how did God describe Job?** *The same way he did in chapter 1, but he added that Job still held his integrity even after his first set of trials.*
- ? **What was Satan’s response to God?** *Satan suggested that if Job were personally harmed, he would curse God.*
- ? **What permission did God grant to Satan?** *Satan could harm Job, but not take his life. This was a step further than the permission given earlier.*

Job 2:7–10

Let’s read what happened in Job 2:7–10 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

 Slides #20–21

- ? **What did Satan do to Job?** *He struck Job with boils over his entire body.*
- ? **How did Job respond?** *He sat in ashes and scraped his sores with a piece of broken pottery.*
- ? **What did Job’s wife ask him to do?** *She told Job to curse God and die.*
- ? **How did Job respond to her request?** *He called her foolish and explained that God brought both good and bad into their lives.*
- ? **To this point, had Job sinned in his responses to his circumstances?** *No, he had not sinned with his lips.*

Discover the Truth

We have just sped through this text, and we could draw out much more from this passage, but we are examining the idea of God's sovereign control over events in the world.

- ? Who directly brought about the calamities in Job's life? *Satan*.
- ? Who gave permission for the calamities to occur? *God*.
- ? How did Job demonstrate his understanding of God's control over his circumstances? *Job said that both the good and bad in his life were the result of God's hand. He also said that nothing he had was of his own doing, but that the Lord had given him what was taken away. Rather than cursing God, Job blessed God. He understood that God was in control.*

After all that had happened to Job in a very short time, he recognized that both good and adversity come from God. God had given Job his family and his wealth, and God had taken Job's physical and material prosperity away. This is a difficult idea to accept. For many, the adages "God helps those who help themselves" and "good things happen to good people" have replaced biblical truth about the circumstances in our lives. We see this mentality in the next section of Job.

God Questions Job

Rather than reading through the next thirty chapters of Job's interaction with his friends, I will give you a summary of what took place and a few quotes.

As Job was mourning his losses, his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, showed up. They sat with him for seven days grieving together. Then Job cursed the day he was born, wishing it had never come (3:1-26).

Eliphaz responded to Job first in chapters 4-5 and suggested that Job's suffering was the result of sin. Look at Job 4:7-8. "Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same."

In chapters 7-10 Job rejected the claim that he had sinned. However, Job called for God to give him an explanation for his sufferings (Job 13).

Zophar took up the charges, urging Job to repent. This cycle repeated itself with the three friends accusing Job and Job looking to God for hope and relief, knowing he had not sinned.

In chapter 32, Elihu, a younger man, broke in to rebuke the others and their false understanding of God. He explained that God is just, fair, almighty, wise, and loving. Job's only sin was his demand that God answer him on his terms.

That led up to chapter 38 where God entered in a whirlwind. Rather than answering Job's questions, however, God took a different approach.

Job 38:1-7

Turn to Job 38 and follow along as I read verses 1-7. We will also look ahead through the end of the book to answer a few more questions. *Read the passage aloud.*

 Slides #22-23

- ? What did God tell Job to do? *Job is to prepare himself to be questioned by God.*
- ? What followed God's instructions to Job? *A series of questions.*
- ? Was Job able to answer any of these questions? *No, they were rhetorical questions that only God could answer.*
- ? How long does this continue in the text? *Through the end of chapter 41, with a small break in chapter 40 where Job began to recognize his limits.*

Job 40:3-5

- ? In Job 40:3-5, what was Job's answer to God's questions? *He recognized that his past attempts to question God were flawed and decided to stop talking.*

 Slide #24

Job 42:1-6

- ? Chapter 42 marks the end of the questioning. How did Job respond to God's series of questions in Job 42:1-6? *He acknowledged that God knows everything and does as he pleases. Job repented in dust and ashes, acknowledging that he was nothing.*

 Slides #25-26

Discover the Truth

Nowhere in this exchange did God explain to Job the purpose in the suffering that he endured, yet Job recognized that God had ordained his circumstances and that he had no right to question God's motives. This idea is reflected throughout the Bible. Let's look at a few cross-references to help us understand this idea.

James 5:11

In James 5:11 we have a partial answer to the reason for Job's sufferings. *Read the verse.*

 Slide #27

- ? What did James use Job as an example of? *Steadfastness/perseverance.*

The Christians James was writing to were facing many trials and persecutions. James pointed them to Job as an example of persevering and trusting God to show himself compassionate and merciful. God restored Job's fortunes and doubled his possessions after his trials. Job serves us today as a witness to persevering in trials even if we can't see their cause or their ultimate purpose.

Romans 8:28-30

Let's look at another passage. Turn to Romans 8:28-30, and would someone please read it? *Have someone read the passage.*

 Slides #28-29

- ? What works together for good? *All things; this would include both good and bad circumstances in life.*
- ? For whom do all things work together for good? *For those who love God and are called according to his purpose.*

In verse 29, we see that the goal of those good and bad things in verse 28 is to conform us to the image of Christ. God uses the circumstances in our lives to make us more like Christ. He brought trials into Job’s life, and Job learned to honor God more as a result of those trials—he was more like Christ at the end of the trial.

If you look back through the verses leading up to verse 28, the “all things” includes the “sufferings of this present time” (v. 18).

Through all of his trials, Job trusted God. He trusted that God had given him the blessings of his early days and that God had taken them away as he saw fit. He had his moments of doubt and questioning, but he knew that the God in whom he trusted was worthy of his trust.

- Have the students turn to the Understanding Trials activity in their Student Guides. Or use the worksheet in the Teacher Digital Resources.

 Slide #30

Understanding Trials Activity

For some of you this may be a new idea, or a new way to look at trials in your life. Take a few minutes to respond to the “Understanding Trials” questions and then we’ll wrap up the lesson. *Have the students take a few minutes to answer the questions in their Student Guides in light of the lesson.*

Connect to the Truth

- ? Would anyone care to share how any of the attributes of God listed in the activity helps them trust that God is working all things together for good? For example, because God is wise, we can trust that the plans he has for us are the best—better than we could design for ourselves. *Encourage discussion.*

Application

Now that we have looked at the account of Job, I hope you have a greater appreciation for the sovereignty of God over our lives—in both our sorrows and our joys. Job is an example for us in terms of perseverance and trusting God even in hard times. It is because we know the character of God—his wisdom, sovereignty, omniscience, justice, holiness, mercy, love, etc.—that we can trust that his plans are always best, even though to us they may appear as disasters.

- ? In light of the trials Job faced, how would you respond to someone who made the claim that trials in your life or an illness you are facing is the result of sin you have not repented of? *While it is possible that sin is the*

 Slides #31–35

reason for the trial, it is not necessarily so. From the account of Job, we know that trials are not necessarily the result of sin—Job was a blameless man according to God’s description of him, yet he faced trials that were allowed by God.

- ?** Some people would claim that Job was not a real person, but simply a character in a poem that helps us understand suffering. How could James 5:11 be used to correct this misunderstanding? *If James is encouraging persecuted Christians, he would not point to a mythical figure as a model of perseverance. His use of Job as an example confirms Job’s existence. To use a mythical figure in this context would be like encouraging someone who was trying to lift a heavy object to remember the example of Atlas or Superman.*
- ?** What comfort can we draw from the behind-the-scenes look at the authority God exercises over Satan’s actions? *Satan is not free to do anything that he wishes; he must work within the limits of God’s permission. This truth should comfort us, for it reminds us that an all-wise God is controlling the trials that we face in life.*

In Romans 8, we read that the circumstances in our lives are working together for good to grow us to be more like Christ. This is true for all who are in Christ by faith in his work on the cross.

- ?** How does this view of circumstances differ from that of others who believe in ideas like karma, fate, chance, or the general principle that what goes around comes around? *Rather than having no real hope about the future, Christians have a certain promise that God has called them to the position they are in. Trusting God offers a real hope that can’t be found in chance, fate, or hoping people will be nice to us. We know that God will ultimately transform us into the image of Christ.*
- ?** What truths have you drawn from our lesson today that you can put into practice as you face various trials throughout the next week? *Discuss various answers.*



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his sovereign control over all of his creation.
- Ask God to grant each person the grace that he or she needs to face the challenges he sends.
- Thank God that he is wise and sovereign.



God Calls Abram

God is faithful to his promises.

Lesson Focus

God called Abram to leave his family and his father's house. God promised Abram that he would have a great land, a great nation, and a great name and that he would be a blessing. Abram believed God and demonstrated amazing faith and obedience even though he never saw the nation promised by God. Because of his faith, Abram was confident in the heavenly rewards he had not seen.

Key Passages

Genesis 11:27–12:9; Hebrews 11:8–16

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Abram demonstrated his faith in God.
- Distinguish between rewards on earth and rewards in heaven.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 11:1 & 6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . . And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “How does God reward faith and obedience?”



Studying God's Word

Print one Abram's Journey Map for your use.

For the A Heavenly Hope activity, use Student Guides or print the worksheet from the Teacher Digital Resources.

Optional Supplements

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 33*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Before the creation of the world, God determined to reveal himself through his merciful plan of redemption (Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:4). God offers this plan by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8) and originally revealed it to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. In the midst of the curse that came as a result of their disobedience, God gave the promise of a Redeemer who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

As we learn of God's call to Abram (later renamed Abraham), we see more of the promise whose fulfillment is revealed throughout Scripture. God's eternal plan to bring redemption continued with the Abrahamic Covenant—God would make Abraham a great nation that would in turn bless all nations (Genesis 12:1–3). Abraham was called physically to be the father of the Jewish nation; but more than that, he was called to be the father of all those who believe by faith in the promised Messiah, both Jew and Gentile (Romans 4:9–12).

Historical/Apologetics Background

What better way is there to look at the history of Abraham than to consider the genealogy carefully recorded by God? Genesis begins at the beginning and gives us details of the history of mankind—starting with Adam. (See Genesis 10 and 11.)

These genealogies are God's way of revealing his intention from the very beginning to use sinful man to accomplish his perfect plan of redemption. We witness generations of the descendants of Adam weaving through history to the patriarch Abraham. We recognize Abraham's role in the plan and watch expectantly as he begets Isaac to carry on the seed that will one day provide the Messiah.

The history of this account includes God's call to Abram to leave Ur and go to the land of Canaan. Abram was traveling with his father and family (Genesis 11:31) and stopped short of Canaan in Haran (Acts 7:2–3). We aren't told why this caravan stopped in Haran, but we do know that Abram's father, Terah, succumbed to the idolatry of that pagan city (Joshua 24:2). It was after Terah died in Haran that God again

called Abram to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1). Once Abram arrived in Canaan, the Lord appeared to him and promised the land to his descendants. Here again, we observe the faith of Abram as he built an altar to the Lord and worshipped him despite the fact that he was still childless. Abram believed God and knew that the truth and promises yet to be fulfilled in this land would include all mankind for all eternity. We trust the Bible as the inerrant Word of God and stand on it firmly as our authority in all things. But it is exciting when God allows us to confirm biblical accounts with present-day discoveries. There are two locations proposed for Ur, the birthplace of Abraham. One is the modern town of Urfa, Turkey (notice the shared root with Ur), which is less than 20 miles from Haran. According to Jewish and Muslim tradition, Urfa is to be identified as Ur, the hometown of Abraham. Many scholars identify Abram's birthplace as the Sumerian city of Ur, excavated by Leonard Wool-

It was because of Abraham's amazing faith—faith in things hoped for but not yet seen (Hebrews 11:1)—that he could obediently follow God's lead and believe the incredible promises made to him (Genesis 17:17). In fact, his faith provided the stamina for him to leave his home, go to a foreign country, and wait for his wife Sarah to conceive and bear a child. This was the child that would produce for Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand by the sea (Hebrews 11:8–12). These descendants would become a new nation, appointed by God himself, through which he would ultimately bring a Savior, Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1). As mentioned earlier, our faith comes through grace, as a gift from God. In Romans 4, the Apostle Paul presents Abraham as an example of faith. Abraham proved his faith by his obedience. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith (Romans 4:20). This faith was what provided Abraham's righteousness (Romans 4:22), just as it is our faith in God's provided Savior, Jesus, that brings us to a righteous standing before him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

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Many scholars identify Abram's birthplace as the Sumerian city of Ur, excavated by Leonard Wool-

ley in 1927. These excavations provide much more information about religion and life during the time of Abram.

The people had adopted Sin (also called Nanna), the moon god, as their patron. A ziggurat was erected as a temple to Sin, perhaps hearkening back only a few generations to the tower of Babel, when God judged the people for disobedience and idolatry by confusing their language. Ur was a thoroughly pagan city where the religious leaders and rulers used idolatry to control the populace. Royal burial

pits were discovered that included masters and their servants—giving the appearance that once the royalty died, servants willingly (or unwillingly) committed suicide. In one case, as many as 68 servants were found buried with their master.

After learning about the pagan, godless nature of the people of Ur, we are not surprised that God would call Abram to move from that city and journey to a new location where he would continue the fulfillment of his plan of redemption for all who would believe.



Studying God's Word

Introduction

Last week we looked at the life of Job. We saw how God brought trials into Job's life through the actions of Satan. Job lost his ten children and almost all of his possessions. Then his body was covered with boils.

- ? Who can describe how Job responded to the trials he was facing? *Job recognized that God had given him his possessions and that God had taken them away. Rather than cursing God, Job worshipped God because he understood God rightly.*
- ? Job was visited by three friends who tried to comfort him in his trials. How did Job's comforters misrepresent God's character and Job's trials? *They accused Job of sinning, and they believed that God would bring these trials to Job only in response to his sin. They failed to recognize that bad things often happen to those who are following God.*

We also read from Romans 8 and saw that, in the context of trials, God works all of those situations together for good for his children. Ultimately, we are being transformed into the image of Christ, which will have its final fulfillment when we see him face to face in glory. We should be comforted in knowing that a wise, loving, sovereign Creator God is holding us in his hands.

Today, we are going to look at someone who was a contemporary of Job. We are going to look at Abram in the next four lessons.

 Slides #1–5

► Write on the board, "How does God reward faith and obedience?"

Abram Obeys

Abram was alive about the same time as Job. If you remember from our lesson on the age of the earth, Abram lived right between Adam and Christ—about 2,000 years after Adam and about 2,000 years before Christ. An interesting note about Abram is that he was alive during Shem's lifetime, about 350 years after the flood. *Refer to the History of Genesis Timeline to help the students recognize the position of Abram in history.*

Genesis 11:27–12:9

Let's read Genesis 11:27–12:9 together. *Divide the passage for class members to read aloud (possibly divide at 12:3).*

- ? Who are Abram's relatives mentioned in this passage? *Terah, his father; Nahor and Haran, his brothers; Lot, his nephew; Milcah, his sister-in-law; Sarai his wife.*
- ? What do we learn about Sarai in verse 30? *She was barren, unable to have children.*
- ? Where did Terah and his family travel from and to? *They began in Ur of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran.*
- ? What was the intended final destination? *The land of Canaan.*

► Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

 Slides #6–11

- ? **Where have we heard of Canaan before?** *He was one of the grandsons of Noah mentioned in Genesis 10:6 and 15 as one of the sons of Ham.*
- ? **Why were they traveling to Canaan?** *God had told Abram to leave his country and his family and travel to a land he would show him.*
- ? **Did Terah make it to Canaan?** *No, he died in Haran at the age of 205.*
- ? **Describe the promises God made to Abram in 12:1–3.** *God would make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, make him a blessing, bless/curse those who blessed/cursed him, and bless all families of the earth in him.*
- ? **What additional promise was given to Abram in verse 7?** *The land of Canaan would be given to his descendants.*
- ? **How old was Abram when he left Haran?** *75.*
- ? **Who went into Canaan?** *Abram, Sarai, Lot, and all of their servants.*
- ? **How did Abram demonstrate his faith in God’s words?** *According to Genesis 12:4, he left just as God told him to do.*
- ? **Where did God appear to Abram once he was in Canaan?** *Near Shechem.*
- ? **What did he do after reaching the land?** *He built an altar to the Lord.*
- ? **Did Abram stay in Shechem?** *No, he moved to the area between Bethel and Ai, where he built another altar, and then moved south.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *Abram was called by God to leave his home and family to become the beginning of a great nation. Abram obeyed God in going to Canaan.*

Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let’s look at a map of Abram’s journey so far. *Use the Abram’s Journey Map to show the route.*

Abram traveled with his father and Lot from Ur to Haran, about 600 miles, likely along the Euphrates River. It seems they stayed in Haran for some time, though it is hard to tell how long from the text. After Terah died, Abram and Lot headed south toward Canaan, about 400 miles, stopping in Shechem and then moving on to Bethel, about 20 miles away. After this, there was a famine, and they continued south toward Egypt. Eventually they returned to Canaan—but we will get to that later.

We know from archaeological excavations of the city of Ur that it was a city centered on the idolatrous worship of Nanna-Sin, the moon god. Abram was called out of this culture to become the founder of the Israelite people who would build a culture that worshipped God rightly.

- ? **What other information do we learn about the relationship between Sarah and Abraham in Genesis 20:12?** *She was his half-sister by a different mother.*

This came into play later in chapter 12 when Abram told Sarai to tell the people of Egypt that she was simply his sister—which was true,

 Slide #12

but not the whole truth. This is one demonstration of the truthfulness of the Bible. Rather than covering up all of the flaws of the “heroes” in the Bible, their sins are exposed, and we learn how God used people like Abram despite their problems. If God used only perfect people, he wouldn’t get anything accomplished through men. Despite Abram’s shortcomings, his faith in God was ultimately evident by his obedience.

Abraham’s Faith

Now we are going to look at Hebrews 11:8–16 together. As we do so, keep in mind that this chapter of Hebrews is often referred to as the Hall of Faith. It tells of saints throughout history who have had great assurance of their salvation by faith in God’s promises.

 Slides #13–16

Hebrews 11:8–16

You might also notice that we are now talking about *Abraham* rather than *Abram* since God changed his name. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? How was Abraham able to obey God? *By faith.*
- ? Did Abraham know where he was going to settle when he left Ur? *No.*
- ? How was Abraham able to live in tents in the land of promise? *By faith.*
- ? Who are Isaac and Jacob? *Isaac is Abraham’s son, and Jacob is Isaac’s son.*
- ? What was Abraham waiting for as he was dwelling in tents? *He was waiting for a city built by God.*
- ? Did Abraham receive the promises of God while he was alive? *He did not receive the promises, but trusted by faith that God was faithful and would fulfill them.*
- ? How did Abraham view his time on earth? *He saw himself as a stranger and exile on the earth, looking forward to a future city.*
- ? What do we learn about the promise to make Abraham a great nation? *From Abraham came descendants in number like the stars of heaven and the sands of the seashore. This is foreshadowing that we will discuss in a future lesson.*
- ? What phrase is repeated through this passage? *By faith.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about God? *God is the builder and maker of the city (heaven), and he is not ashamed to give it to those who have faith.*

Discover the Truth

- ? What is meant by “the land of promise”? *This is a reference to the land of Canaan that was promised to Abram.*
- ? What is the city referred to in verse 10? *As verse 16 also states, this is a heavenly city, not a worldly place.*

- ? Why is Abram referred to as Abraham? *God had changed his name (Genesis 17:5).*
- ? What did Abraham view as his homeland? *Even though God had promised the land of Canaan to his descendants, Abraham was looking forward to heaven and trusting that God was faithful to deliver on that promise.*

Matthew 6:19–21

- ? Jesus talks about the relationship between our money and our hearts in Matthew 6:19–21. *Have someone read the passage. How does Abraham reflect this attitude? Based on the information we have in the Hebrews passage, he did not focus on building his own earthly kingdom, but on a future heavenly kingdom.*

Rather than looking for material blessings on earth and having a kingdom established that he could reign over, Abraham saw himself as a pilgrim. He trusted God to fulfill his promises, but he never actually saw those promises fulfilled. This is a great example of faith for us to follow. Just as Abraham had assurance that God was faithful to honor his promises, we can have that same assurance by faith. We are going to take a few minutes to discuss this idea in groups so that we can make a connection to our individual lives.

 Slide #17

- Have the students turn to the A Heavenly Hope activity in their Student Guides. Or use the worksheet in the Teacher Digital Resources.

A Heavenly Hope Activity

Have the students break into groups to discuss the questions from A Heavenly Hope.

We are going to take a few minutes to stop and think about the ideas of faith and obedience and consider where we are placing our hope. There are several questions in your Student Guides for you to discuss in small groups. We will come back together to discuss these ideas. *Assign an appropriate amount of time for the groups to work on the activity.*

Connect to the Truth

Thinking through issues like these can raise lots of questions. Hopefully, we are not just learning from Scripture so that we can know more, but so that we can grow and change to be more like Christ.

- ? The Colossians passage that you read calls us as Christians to set our minds on heavenly things rather than on things here on earth. **In what ways is Abraham a role model for us in this matter?** *Abraham understood that God's promise would be fulfilled, but he looked forward to the hope of heaven rather than the establishment of an earthly kingdom. He focused on heavenly things, not on building his own earthly kingdom.*

As Christians, we should not place our hope or the focus of our activities on earthly things, but on heavenly things. God's riches for us are not found in earthly treasures but in the salvation that we have in Christ. In Ephesians 1, Paul calls us to recognize the inheritance that we have through the grace of God. Abraham recognized this same idea in God's

 Slide #18

promises—his hope was in dwelling with God after he died, not merely in his temporary existence on earth.

Application

Think about what we read about Abraham. We see his faith and that he was looking forward to the hope of heaven. He exercised his faith in his obedience to leave his homeland. And in the next several lessons, we will see how he continued to obey God in faith.

Let us make sure that we think of how we can apply these ideas as we leave and go out into the world we live in. We want to make sure that we are not merely hearing the Word, but seeking to be doers of what we read in it.

 Slides #19–24

- ?** We know that God has promised to reward those who place their faith in him. When can we expect to receive those rewards? *While we may receive blessings here on earth, we should not expect them or focus on them. Many believers across the globe face great persecution and the loss of property and life; their hope must be fixed on heaven. Most of us have lost sight of these truths in our prosperous situations in the West.*
- ?** Have you ever heard the expression “you are so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good”? Is this a biblically grounded idea in light of what we have been studying today? *Unless it involves locking yourself in a monastery, which really isn't being “heavenly minded,” being focused on heavenly things is the goal of believers. As we understand more about the things of God, we will be moved to respond to God's call to serve him and those around us. Being heavenly minded will lead to our working to build God's Kingdom with the expectation of an eternity with him in heaven.*
- ?** Why is it so important to understand God's attribute of faithfulness as we seek to follow him in faith? *Without knowing that God's character includes perfect faithfulness, we might doubt that God will actually keep his promises. Yet Scripture is full of examples, like Abraham, to assure us of the truth of his faithfulness.*
- ?** How does the world react to the idea of storing up treasures in heaven rather than seeking to build fortunes and seeking pleasures here on earth? *Most in the world are seeking their own gain, and to tell them otherwise would be quite radical.*
- ?** In what ways are you failing to set your mind on things above? How can you seek to change this attitude? *Discuss various answers, recognizing that it is only by God's grace and trusting in his faithfulness that we can accomplish such things.*
- ?** As you seek to live your life with a focus on heavenly things, how might you be viewed by unbelievers? How can this be a launching pad from

which you can share the gospel? *Discuss various answers, recognizing that as we live lives of distinction, we will have opportunities to share the gospel, the source for our hope of heaven. We can also expect to face persecution for our firm stand on the Bible and our trust in Jesus.*



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his direction for his children.
- Ask God to give each person assurance of his faithfulness to fulfill everything he has promised.
- Thank God for his faithfulness and for the hope of heaven that we have through Christ.



Abram and Lot

Abram and Lot separate from each other.

Lesson Focus

Abram and Lot separated from one another. Lot chose the best land for himself and moved near the wicked city of Sodom. Abram trusted God and believed in God's promise.

Key Passages

Genesis 13:1–18, 14:12–24; 2 Samuel 18:18; Hebrews 7:1–4

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain why Lot chose to settle near Sodom.
- Compare Abram's godly choices to Lot's worldly choices.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 11:1 & 6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . . And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “What distinguished Lot’s desires from Abram’s desires?”



Studying God’s Word

Print one Abram and Lot Map to show to the class.

For the Abram’s Example activity, use Student Guides or print the worksheet from the Teacher Digital Resources.

Optional Supplements

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 34*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

In Genesis 12:10–20, a famine led Abram to travel to Egypt. Here, Abram feared for his life because his wife Sarai was beautiful, and he thought the Egyptians would kill him to take her. Rather than trusting in God’s protection, he lied about Sarai being his wife and instead claimed she was only his sister, which was partially true because she was his half-sister (see Genesis 20:12). However, his deception backfired because Sarai was taken into Pharaoh’s household. God intervened and plagued Pharaoh’s household until the truth of Abram and Sarai’s relationship became known to Pharaoh. Pharaoh gave Sarai back to Abram and sent him away.

After Abram left Egypt, conflict arose between his servants and Lot’s servants. They both had many animals and possessions, so Abram proposed that they separate. This solution enabled them to spread out and find land that could support their animals. Abram let Lot choose his land first. Lot decided to move to the plain of Jordan because it was well-watered and looked the best. Abram remained in the land of Canaan.

Lot’s decision led him to settle in Sodom, a wicked city. His location would land him in the middle of a

conflict. Four Mesopotamian kings joined together to raid the cities of the Jordan, including Sodom. In a battle in the Valley of Siddim (Salt Sea), the king of Sodom was among the five defending kings who lost. The winning kings raided Sodom, captured all the people, including Lot and his family, and took all the wealth of the city (Genesis 14:1–12). When Abram heard what had happened to his nephew, he formed a group of trained men and pursued the plundering kings. He defeated them and recaptured everything that was taken (Genesis 14:13–16).

When Abram returned to Sodom, two men came to receive him. Melchizedek, a king and priest of God, brought bread and wine to Abram and blessed him. Abram gave him a tithe from everything he recovered (Genesis 14:18–20). The king of Sodom also came to Abram and wanted him to keep all the recaptured goods. But Abram refused the king’s offer (Genesis 14:21–24). Abram’s actions after his victory showed his allegiance to God because he gave a tithe to Melchizedek rather than aligning himself with a wicked king by keeping the spoils for himself. Abram didn’t want the king of Sodom to be able to claim that he had made him wealthy (Genesis 14:23). The difference between Abram’s and Lot’s decision-making demonstrates the importance of following God’s direction rather than relying on our own wisdom.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Valley of Siddim

Critics of the Bible have questioned how the battle of the kings could have taken place in the “Valley of Siddim,” which is the Dead Sea (Genesis 14:3). How could this area be both a valley and a sea? The Dead Sea has both a northern and a southern basin, which are currently isolated from each other. Geological evidence suggests that throughout history the southern basin’s water level has risen and fallen. If the water level of the southern basin was dried up during Abram’s day, this area would be a valley. When the water level rose and connected the two basins, this valley would again be part of the Dead Sea.

Genesis 14:10 also describes bitumen (tar) pits in the Valley of Siddim. These pits claimed the lives of some of the fleeing kings and their men. These pits could have been created in the dried-up south-

ern basin, which would contain pools of evaporating salt water and bacteria. These conditions make the ground unstable enough to break and claim the lives of fleeing men.¹

Melchizedek

Following the battle in the Valley of Siddim and Abram’s recovery of the captured people and possessions from Sodom, a mysterious character appears in Genesis 14—the priest-king Melchizedek. Melchizedek’s name is interpreted “king of righteousness,” and he is also called king of Salem, which means “king of peace.” Salem may also be an early name for Jerusalem. The mystery of his character stems from

¹ Kyle Pope, “The Modern Dead Sea and Genesis Fourteen,” *Biblical Insights* 2.2, February 2002, <http://ancientroadpublications.com/Studies/BiblicalStudies/GenesisFourteen.html>.

his sudden and brief appearance in Scripture with no background other than his name and titles.

Melchizedek's appearance may be short, but it is significant. The New Testament uses Melchizedek as a picture of our king and priest, Jesus (Hebrews 7). Although Melchizedek is used as a type of Christ, he was just a man. However, his name and his unique royal priesthood share similarities with Jesus.

Priests were esteemed in Judaism because they connected people to God by offering sacrifices; they were mediators. But human priests were sinful. They had to offer sacrifices just like the people did to demonstrate their repentance and obedience to God. The point of Hebrews 7 is to show that Jesus is the ultimate high priest, the perfect mediator to bridge the gap between sinful man and God (Hebrews 8:1). Jesus was sinless, so he was the perfect sacrifice.

Unlike the Levitical priesthood, which was just for the Jews, Melchizedek's priesthood was universal. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was also universal, for all mankind. Jesus was not subject to royalty because he is a King, just as Melchizedek was a king. The Bible indicates that Melchizedek's kingship was appointed rather than inherited due to the phrase "without father, without mother, without genealogy" (Hebrews 7:3). His position was honored by Abram, who gave him a tenth of the spoils (Hebrews 7:4). This is the first example of giving a tithe to the Lord's service.

The picture of Jesus in the person of Melchizedek is evidence of God's perfect plan of redemption, thousands of years before Jesus would come to earth. God's plan of salvation begins in Genesis and continues through all of Scripture.



Studying God's Word

Introduction

Last week we were introduced to Abram, or Abraham as we more often refer to him. Abram was called by God to leave his homeland and go to a place he didn't even know. He left Ur with his father, wife, and nephew and arrived in Canaan many years later after his father had died.

- ? **What did we learn about Abram's inheritance?** *He was looking to gain a reward that was not earthly. He never inherited a land, but his descendants would, and he never saw the promises made to him fulfilled in their earthly sense. He was looking for an inheritance that was ultimately heavenly—a city made by God (Hebrews 11:8–16).*

We see Abram as an example of a man who put his faith in God, even when he didn't see the promises fulfilled in an immediate sense. As we consider Abram's faith, we can see how the promises given to him were fulfilled over the centuries after his death. This can be a great encouragement for us as we consider the promises of God. God is faithful to bring to pass all that he has promised. That is just as true in our lives as it was in Abram's. Because God's character does not change, we can trust him just as Abram did.

Today, we are going to look at an event that happened after Abram had been in Canaan for some time. There had been a famine in Canaan, so Abram took his family to Egypt. While there, he convinced Sarai to lie about being his wife. As a result, God cursed Pharaoh's household, which created tension between Abram and Pharaoh. You can read about that in the second half of Genesis 12.

 Slides #1–4


- Write on the board, "What distinguished Lot's desires from Abram's desires?"
- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

Abram and Lot Separate

It is during the return from Egypt that we will pick up the reading today. We are going to look at the passage where Lot and Abram part company and try to determine who got the better land.

Genesis 13:1–18

Let's read Genesis 13:1–18 together. *Divide the passage for class members to read aloud (possibly divide at 13:10). As you work through the lesson, refer to the places on the Abram and Lot map.*

 Slides #5–13

- ? **Where did they first go after leaving Egypt?** *The ESV refers to the Negev (Negev) to refer to the location, which is the wilderness, south of the Dead Sea. The NKJV says the South, referring to the southern region of Canaan.*
- ? **What forms of wealth did Abram have?** *Silver, gold, and livestock—he was very rich.*
- ? **Where did they go next?** *They moved toward Bethel. This was further to the north.*

- ?** **What is significant about Bethel?** *The Lord had appeared to Abram there when he first arrived in Canaan, and Abram had built an altar there (12:7).*
- ?** **What did Abram do at Bethel?** *He called upon the name of the Lord (v. 4).*
- ?** **How should we understand this phrase?** *Abram was worshipping God at the altar he had made. We see the same in 12:8 and many other places, including Psalm 116:17 where it is connected with thanksgiving.*
- ?** **How did Lot’s wealth compare to Abram’s?** *He had flocks and herds and tents, but it does not seem he was as wealthy as Abram, based on this description.*
- ?** **What was the source of conflict in the passage?** *The land was not able to support all of the flocks—there was not enough vegetation and possibly water to sustain all of them.*
- ?** **What conflict arose out of these circumstances?** *The herdsman of Lot and Abram were fighting over the limited resources.*
- ?** **How did Abram respond to this conflict?** *He sought to resolve it by offering Lot a proposal.*
- ?** **What offer did Abram make to Lot?** *He offered him his choice of any part of the whole land, agreeing to go the opposite way of Lot’s choice.*
- ?** **Did Abram limit Lot to going to the left or to the right? Is this phrase meant to be understood literally?** *Rather than being strictly literal, this is an idiom that means if you go one way, I will go the other.*
- ?** **What did Lot notice about the land in the plain of the Jordan?** *He saw that it was well watered, a lush environment for feeding his flocks.*
- ?** **What is the plain of the Jordan compared to?** *It is compared to the garden of the Lord (Eden) and like the area of Zoar at the south end of the Dead Sea—a lush area at the time.*
- ?** **What does verse 11 reveal about Lot’s motivation?** *He chose what would benefit himself.*
- ?** **Where did Abram settle after they split company?** *In the land of Canaan west of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. Verse 18 places his final home near Hebron.*
- ?** **Where did Lot’s area extend to?** *As far south as Sodom, but on the east side of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.*
- ?** **What do we learn about Sodom in verse 13?** *The men of Sodom were wicked and great sinners against the Lord.*
- ?** **What type of literary device is used in referring to the men of Sodom?** *This is “foreshadowing” what we will read about in chapter 19, the topic of the next lesson.*
- ?** **After they parted, what experience did Abram have?** *God reassured Abram of the promise to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan.*

- ? How did God describe the size of the land promised? *God told Abram to look as far as he could in every direction, promising that land to him.*
- ? How long would the land be given to his descendants? *Forever.*
- ? What did God remind Abram of regarding his descendants? *God would give him descendants in number as the dust of the earth.*
- ? Is this meant to be a literal description of the number? *No, this is a figure of speech to acknowledge a large number, as is made clear by the last phrase in verse 16.*

Discover the Truth

As we consider the actions of Abram and Lot, it is pretty clear that Lot was interested in promoting his own well-being while Abram was looking out for the best interest of all involved. Lot chose the best for himself. Abram gave up his right of first choice as the elder (Lot's uncle), and allowed Lot first choice. Abram was very aware of the conflict and didn't want it to cause any division or strife in his family. So he offered Lot the choice of the land.

As the foreshadowing in verse 13 indicates, Lot is going to run into trouble. But we will get to that in a minute and more in the next lesson.

Abram demonstrated trust in God's plan by remaining in Canaan to establish his household there. He was still a wanderer, but he was living in the land God had promised to give him.

- ? What attribute of God is on display as God reassured Abram in verses 14–17? *He was showing his faithfulness, reassuring Abram that he would keep his promise to give him the land.*

Despite the time that has passed, God still intends to give Abram the land that he promised and many descendants. As it stands, Abram still has no children, and he is likely wondering what is taking God so long. But it seems Abram continues to trust God, even as things are challenging and the future is unclear.

Abram's Example Activity

Have the students work in groups to complete the activity in their Student Guides.

You are going to take a few minutes to compare the actions of Lot and Abram to the example of Jesus. In your Student Guide you will find the Abram's Example activity. Look at the cross-references there, and we will discuss what you find in a little while. Have the students work in groups for an appropriate amount of time. They will consider how Abram was acting like Christ by offering Lot the choice of what he wanted, taking what was left over. Just as Christ was willing to serve, Abram was willing to serve.

- Have the students turn to the Abram's Example activity in their Student Guides. Or use the worksheet in the Teacher Digital Resources.

Connect to the Truth

As you read through Mark 10:41–45 and Luke 22:24–30, I trust you found some parallels in the way the people were acting.

 Slides #14–17

- ? How do these passages relate to Abram’s interaction with Lot regarding the conflict that arose between their herdsmen? *Just as Abram was willing to give up his privilege in order to defuse the conflict with Lot, Jesus came to earth and gave up his heavenly privilege to serve others. In this sense, Abram’s selflessness foreshadows Jesus’ giving himself for his enemies.*
- ? If we aligned these scenes, who would represent Lot in the New Testament passages? *Lot was seeking his own personal gain just as the disciples were seeking to have a high standing in Christ’s kingdom.*
- ? Can you think of an example in your life where there was a conflict over property or time or resources of some sort? How did you respond to the conflict? How might your response be different in the future in light of these passages? *Discuss various answers, encouraging repentance and the seeking of forgiveness where possible.*

We have in Abram and in Jesus an example of laying aside our own personal gain to serve others. Our tendency is to seek our own benefit at the expense of others, but that is not demonstrating the mind of Christ. Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:3–4 to “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

As we seek to follow Christ and consider the example of Abram, we must ask God to help us set aside our own advantages and pursue the welfare of others. This is part of denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following in our Savior’s footsteps (Luke 9:23).

Rescuing Lot

After the two parted company, Lot wound up near Sodom and Abram near Hebron, basically across the Dead Sea from Sodom. During this time, there was an alliance of kings from the Mesopotamian region led by Chedorlaomer (14:1). They subjugated the kings of the city-states near the Dead Sea (14:2–4), but those kings rebelled after 13 years. As war came to the Valley of Siddim, Lot was caught up in the conflict.

Genesis 14:12–24

Let’s pick up the events in Genesis 14:12–24. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? How is Lot described in verse 12? *He is Abram’s brother’s son, or his nephew.*

 Slides #18–22

- ? **How is Abram described in verse 13?** *He is called a Hebrew. This is the first use of this term in Scripture and identifies Abram in the line of Eber as we saw in Genesis 11. This term will be commonly used as we move through the rest of the Bible.*
- ? **What happened to Lot?** *He was taken captive by the northern kings.*
- ? **Was Lot the only one taken captive?** *While verse 12 makes no mention of others, it must have been his household that was taken captive since someone escaped and knew where to find Abram to tell him of the news. Verse 16 also talks of bringing back “the women and the people” along with Lot and his goods.*
- ? **How did Abram respond to the news?** *Abram gathered his servants, armed them, and pursued the raiders.*
- ? **What do we learn about the men he took with him?** *There were 318 of them, they were trained, and they were part of his household.*
- ? **Where did the pursuit take Abram and his men?** *They went north toward Dan (v. 14). They eventually continued farther north to Hobah, north of Damascus (v. 15). Point these areas out on the map. In a straight line, it is over 150 miles from Hebron to Damascus, so this was a major undertaking. As an interesting note, Dan was not called that at the time of Abram, but was later named Dan for the tribe of Dan who moved to the northern region of the promised land.*
- ? **What was Abram’s strategy for attacking the raiders?** *He divided his forces and attacked by night.*
- ? **What was the outcome of the battle(s)?** *They were victorious and brought back Lot, his goods, and the other women and people.*

Abram was successful in rescuing Lot and the goods the raiders had taken. Now the text turns to what happened as the group returned.

- ? **Who met Abram as he first returned?** *The king of Sodom.*
- ? **Where did this meeting take place?** *The Valley of Shaveh.*
- ? **What is added to the identification of the location?** *A parenthetical statement identifies this as the King’s Valley.*

2 Samuel 18:18

- ? **So, why is this parenthetical remark here? Let’s look at 2 Samuel 18:18 to see if we can understand?** *This passage uses the same name for a valley near Jerusalem. It is generally identified as the Kidron Valley. Since Moses is the author of Genesis, and he is writing to an audience that is removed from these events by almost 500 years, he gives both names—King’s Valley and Absalom’s Monument. Over that time, these names have changed. He provides the new name alongside the old name for the benefit of his readers. If you look back to verses 2, 3, 7, and 8 of Genesis 14, you will notice the same thing there. We have modern examples of this with the city of Mumbai formerly known as Bombay and Istanbul formerly known as Constantinople. Even the names of countries change, so when we talk about Myanmar, we often add “formerly known as Burma” to help our audience understand.*

 Slide #23

- ? Who else came to meet Abram? *Melchizedek.*
- ? What do we learn about Melchizedek? *He was the king of Salem and a priest of God. Salem is an older name of Jerusalem, which doesn't appear in the Bible until Joshua 10:1 during the conquest of the promised land.*
- ? What does that name Melchizedek mean? How can we find that meaning? *Some students may have study Bibles with the notes explaining the meaning of the name. Others will likely have a cross-reference in their Bibles to Hebrews 7.*

Hebrews 7:1–4

 Slides #24–25

Let's look at Hebrews 7:1–4. Assign a reader. *If time allows, you may want to read up through verse 10 or even all of chapter 7.*

- ? How does Hebrews 7:1–4 describe Melchizedek? *His name means “king of righteousness,” and since he is king of Salem, he is “king of peace.” It also describes him as a priest and as having no known genealogy. The passage goes on to identify Melchizedek as a type of Christ and refers to Jesus as the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek rather than Levi's line. Hebrews 7:17 contains a quote from Psalm 110:4 to demonstrate the eternal priesthood of Jesus.*
 - ? Now back to Genesis 14. What two things did Melchizedek do for Abram? *He brought bread and wine to feed him, and he offered a blessing to him.*
 - ? What do we learn about God in this blessing? *God is the Most High God, he owns the earth, and he delivered Abram's enemies into his hands. Here we learn the name El Elyon (God Most High).*
 - ? What did Abram do in response to the blessing? *He gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.*
 - ? What do we call it when a person gives a tenth of their money or income? *A tithe.*
- This is the first mention in the Bible of giving a tithe to a priest.
- ? What did this tithe signify about the relationship between Abram and Melchizedek? *Abram acknowledged the priestly role and the true blessing from Melchizedek.*
 - ? How did Abram respond to the king of Sodom's offer to take the spoils of war as his own? *He refused to take anything for himself, but let his men and the others who helped (his three allies in verse 24) take their portion of the recovered goods as payment for their work and for risking their lives.*
 - ? What does the phrase “I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High” mean? *This is an acknowledgment of loyalty to God. While it is not perfectly clear, this is likely an idiom for what we would call a salute or tribute. Abram was pledging his loyalty to God, not the king.*
 - ? What did this signify about the relationship between Abram and the king of Sodom? *Abram didn't want to be under any obligation to the king of Sodom, so he refused the gifts.*

- ? **Why might Abram have rejected this king's offer?** *Abram knew Sodom as a city of wickedness, so any allegiance to the king could have undermined his duty to God or could have brought reproach on God in the future.*

Discover the Truth

As we saw Abram in his dealings with Lot, again we see him act in a way that was looking out for the benefit of others rather than his own benefit. Not only that, but he acknowledged God's role in his victory by offering a tithe to God's priest. At the same time, he rejected a blessing (in a physical sense) from the king of the wicked city of Sodom. He acknowledged that God's blessings made him rich while denying any credit to this wicked king.

- ? **How do we see the consequences of Lot's choice to live in the fertile land?** *While it may not be directly related, living in the fertile area, and specifically near Sodom, led to his captivity.*
- ? **How do we see God's providence in this passage?** *Specifically, in the blessing of Abram, God's deliverance in the battle was acknowledged. Secondly, Abram acknowledged God's providence by honoring Melchizedek as God's priest rather than honoring the king of a wicked city.*
- ? **Which attributes of God are highlighted in this passage?** *God is shown to be sovereign over the battle. He is acknowledged as independent since he is the Possessor of heaven and earth—he needs nothing since he owns it all. He is merciful in providing relief to Lot from his captivity. He is holy and worthy of blessing and honor. Refer to the Attributes of God poster.*

And in the midst of this account, we see a foreshadowing of Jesus in Melchizedek. We aren't going to go into too much detail about this point, but this would be a great idea for you to study further in your own personal devotions. Just as Melchizedek serves as a priest outside of the line of Levi, so does Jesus. The writer of Hebrews draws this out in Hebrews 7, offering us an amazing picture of a perfect high priest who has offered a perfect sacrifice for sinners. As Abram was blessed through Melchizedek, we have an infinitely greater blessing through Jesus, our high priest, and a perfectly righteous King to rule over us.

Application

As we think about what we have read about Abram, we can't help but see him as a faithful example of a servant of God. He shows us the character of Jesus, even though he had his human failings. He sought the welfare of others and trusted in God rather than man.

On the other hand, Lot gives us a negative example in these cases. He sought his own benefit, which brought him into the middle of a conflict. And it led to even more trouble. But that is our topic for next week. Lot's

choices brought others into harm's way, requiring a rescue by Abram and his allies.

But in the midst of the difficulties—the conflict between the herdsmen and the rescue of the hostages—we are given a glimpse of Melchizedek as a priest and king of God. Here we see the scarlet thread woven throughout the Bible, pointing us to Jesus as our perfectly righteous King and our blameless high priest. Rather than a priest to whom we must give tithes and who performs repeated rituals on our behalf, Jesus has completed the roles of Melchizedek and is our high priest forever. His sacrifice was perfect and complete, so there is no need for continued ritual sacrifice.

We can rest in the perfect work of Jesus and look to Abram as an example for our living a life that is pleasing to Christ.

Let us make sure that we think of how we can apply these ideas as we leave and go out into the world we live in. We want to make sure that we are not merely hearing the Word, but seeking to be doers of what we read in it.

 Slides #26–31

- ?** What interesting historical or geographical nugget did you learn today as we considered this text? *Discuss various answers.*
- ?** Why is it so hard for us to count others as more significant than ourselves, as Abram did for Lot, especially in the midst of a conflict? *Without a new heart, our nature is sinful, and we desire our own benefit. Even after our conversion, we still must fight the lust of our flesh and seek to live a life worthy of Christ's calling on our lives. We, too, often seek comfort over holiness. Here, Abram can be an example for us, encouraging us to ultimately look to Jesus as our perfect example.*
- ?** Why is it important for us to know how to use cross-references and other features of our Bibles as we seek to fully understand God's Word? *We must recognize what a privileged position we have of living in a period where we have God's completed revelation. As we seek to interpret Scripture with Scripture, we also have the benefit of study tools in our Bibles to point us to parallel passages. As we studied this passage, these tools gave us the benefit of understanding how Melchizedek prefigures Jesus, as described in Hebrews 7.*
- ?** What did you learn about Jesus from this Old Testament text? *Discuss various ideas, especially connected to Hebrews 7 and his role as perfect King and high priest forever. Also, remind the students that the attributes of God that were discussed are the attributes of Jesus, since he is God.*

- ? Have you ever faced a choice like Lot's choice of where to settle? How did you make that decision? *Discuss various answers, encouraging repentance for past sinful decisions and acknowledging God's grace when right choices were made.*
- ? What choices are you facing in your life right now that you need counsel or prayer for? *Discuss various answers, offering prayer for wisdom.*



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his revelation to us in all of Scripture.
- Ask God for courage, by his Spirit, to live a life which is pleasing to him and which counts others more significant than ourselves.
- Thank Jesus for being our perfect King and high priest.



Sodom and Gomorrah

God punished the wicked cities but spared Lot's family.

Lesson Focus

The Lord and two angels appeared to Abraham and announced judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah because of the sin and wickedness God saw there. Abraham pleaded not only for the cities but also for his nephew Lot. God must punish sin, but he had mercy on Lot and his family.

Key Passages

Genesis 18:1–33, 19:1–29

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that God's justice demands a punishment for sin.
- Identify the sins that God hates.
- Describe God's mercy toward sinners.

Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

Lesson Preparation

Come On In

Write on the board, “How can God be both just and merciful?”

Studying God’s Word

Use a recording of Genesis 18–19 to present the Bible passages (see biblegateway.com/resources/audio/ for online audio).

Activity: Respectable Sins

Students will take time to reflect on some sins that are often considered “acceptable” and compare them to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Use Student Guides or print out one Respectable Sins worksheet for each student.

Optional Supplements

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the

Teacher Digital Resources under *Lesson*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The journey of Abram to Canaan is one wrought with detours and adventure. The Lord told Abram to leave the land of his family and settle in a land the Lord would show him. Abram was to be the head of a great nation, a blessing to many, and his name would be great (Genesis 12:1–3). Abram listened, obeyed, and left the land of Ur. God tells us that Lot, Abram’s nephew, was part of the company of travelers from the beginning of the journey. After settling first in Haran (Genesis 11:31), they proceeded at the Lord’s call to Canaan. Then there was another detour to Egypt because of a famine (Genesis 12:10). Through all of their wanderings, the Lord continued to increase their livestock until the land was no longer sufficient to support Abram, Lot, and all of their possessions (Genesis 13:5–7). This is when uncle and nephew parted ways—Abram to the land of Canaan and Lot to the cities of the valley—where sin and wickedness prevailed (Genesis 13:12–13).

God’s justice demands punishment for sin and wickedness, and he was soon to providentially bring an end to the sin that permeated Sodom and Gomorrah. In a meeting between Abraham, the Angel of the Lord (Jesus), and two angels, the Lord confirmed that Abraham and Sarah would bear a son (Genesis 18:14). He also revealed the plan to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20–21).

Historical/Apologetics Background

There are many who cannot believe that this account could possibly be true. What can we say to those blinded to the truth? First of all, the fact that this event is referenced so many times throughout Scripture (see above for list) verifies that there was never any doubt by these writers that this event occurred just as it was recorded.

We know that those who do not rely on the authority of God’s Word resort to relying on man’s “evidence.” And there was no historical or archaeo-

Abraham pleaded with the Lord to spare the city. However, God must punish sin; his justice demands that he punish those who turn from him in wickedness. And evidently, there were fewer than ten righteous people in the city (Genesis 18:32). This account illustrates just how wicked men can be. Lot, too, had succumbed to the evil influence of the city as demonstrated when, in order to protect the angels, he offered his own daughters to the men of the city to satisfy their lusts (Genesis 19:6–8).

But God is also merciful. And his mercy was shown to Lot and his daughters. In spite of their own sinfulness, they were spared from the destruction of the city (Genesis 19:16).

This account is tragic. The sin of man is great, and God’s judgment is to be feared—not taken lightly. Lot’s wife did not learn that lesson. And it was only a short time after she was mercifully spared death in the city that she again blatantly disobeyed God during the escape—when she looked back at the destruction behind her (Genesis 19:17). For this she was judged and turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).

The terrible destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is an event referred to throughout Scripture to demonstrate the severity of God’s judgment: Deuteronomy 29:23; Isaiah 1:9, 13:19; Jeremiah 50:40; Lamentations 4:6; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9; Matthew 10:15; Luke 17:28–29; Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:7.

And yet God also revealed his mercy—by sparing Lot and his daughters. This is the mercy he provides to all sinners who in faith and repentance accept his forgiveness and turn to Jesus Christ.

logical evidence to corroborate the biblical account—until recently.

It is clear from various biblical passages that Sodom and Gomorrah should be located in the Dead Sea region. When Abraham and his nephew Lot parted ways (Genesis 13:8–13), Lot chose to settle in the Jordan Valley “in the direction of Zoar” and moved his tents to “the cities of the valley” as far as Sodom. According to Genesis 14, the cities of the plain, or valley, which include Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, Zeboim, and Admah, joined forces to battle a

coalition of Mesopotamian kings in the “Valley of Siddim” (Genesis 14:8)—that is, the Salt Sea. This is referring to the Dead Sea region.

Between 1973 and 1979, two archaeologists surveyed an area southeast of the Dead Sea and located the remains of five cities. From north to south the cities are Bab Edh-Dhra (first discovered in 1924), Numeira, Safi, Feifa, and Khanazir. Could these be the five “cities of the valley” identified in Genesis?

The most remarkable feature of Bab Edh-Dhra is the number of graves. An estimated 20,000 tombs are located on the site. These family tombs held approximately half a million people with over three million pottery vessels. This was clearly a well-populated area in the past, and may well be the ancient city of Sodom.

The excavation of the city of Numeira exposed that this entire area was covered by the ashy debris of its final destruction, up to 16 inches in depth. This, coupled with the fact that the Arabic name for this city has similar consonants as the Hebrew name for Gomorrah, led biblical archaeologists to conclude that this could be the city of Gomorrah.

“Proof” is not necessary to verify God’s Word. In fact, we need nothing more than the word of the one who ordained and accomplished this historical account. However, God allows for these confirmations so that we will be better equipped to defend our faith and the Bible against the skeptics who attempt to dishonor and discredit it.

The biblical narratives of this time period also fit well with what we know from historical records left by other Middle Eastern societies. The customs, laws, legal agreements, and family arrangements match societies such as the Amorites, Sumerians, and Akkadians. For example, during this particular period in history in the Middle East, the role of the patriarch in family life was very important. Family structure included three levels: tribe, clan (family), and household (Joshua 7:14). The fundamental societal unit of the household included a patriarch, his wife, his sons and their wives, his grandchildren, and other dependents. These households often lived in a compound, with houses around a central courtyard, encircled by a low wall.

Abraham, as patriarch of his household, was responsible for the economic support, religious well-being, and safety of his entire household (Genesis 14:13–16). In Genesis 18 we see Abraham, as the patriarch, fulfilling his hospitality obligations to protect and care for sojourners or aliens (Leviticus 19:33–34). Hospitality was one of the most highly regarded virtues of the ancient world, and still is in many societies of the Middle East. Abraham showed his guests great honor by preparing them a meal.

Again, as we compare the history book of the universe with secular historical accounts, we gain confirmation and confidence that God’s Word is true.



Studying God's Word

Introduction

In last week's lesson, we talked about the relationship between Abram and Lot. We saw two examples of how Abram acted in a way that esteemed others better than himself.

- ? What did Abram do that demonstrated his character? *He sought to resolve the conflict between Lot and his household by offering the pick of the land to Lot, and he went to Lot's rescue when he was taken captive.*

When Abram recognized the conflict with Lot, he didn't seek to benefit from the strife. As his elder, Abram could have told Lot which land he was going to move toward. But he didn't use his authority for his own gain. Lot sought his own benefit and it led to problems.

As we consider various Old Testament figures, we can see Lot as a negative example and Abram as a positive example. We can seek to emulate Abram's character, but we don't want to stop there lest we find ourselves trapped in a form of legalism that is focused on outward actions. Abram was justified by his faith, not his actions.

We want to make sure that we are connecting these ideas to the greater example of Jesus Christ. We know that Abram's faith in God was the source of his character. In his actions, we can see Abram as a type of Christ.

Today, we will continue looking at Abram's life and examine the judgment of God against sin.

- Write on the board, "How can God be both just and merciful?"

 Slides #1-3

 Slide #4

Abraham Pleads for Sodom

Our lesson today steps a little out of the strict chronology so that we can keep Lot and Abram in focus. We will step back to the events of Genesis 15 next week. Also, we will see the name *Abraham* in the text today rather than *Abram*, a point we will discuss in detail next week.

As we learned last week, Abram, looking over the well-watered plain, offered Lot the pick of the territory. Lot chose the fertile valley and traveled east toward Sodom. Abram headed west toward Canaan and settled in land owned by his ally, Mamre, near a group of terebinth trees near Hebron.

Genesis 18:1-33

Rather than reading the passage today, we are going to listen to it. Have your Bibles open and follow along as we listen to Genesis 18. There are two main ideas in this passage, so listen for those as we hear the Word of God. *Play Genesis 18. If you do not have a way to play the passage, have someone read the chapter aloud.*

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

 Slides #5-17

- ? **Who are the individuals in this chapter?** *Abraham, Sarah, a servant, the Lord, and two other men.*
- ? **What are the two main ideas of this passage?** *The promise of a son is affirmed (verses 1–15) and the pending destruction of Sodom is announced (verses 16–33).*
- ? **How did Abraham show hospitality to the three men?** *He invited them to rest in the shade, have their feet washed, and have some food. Abraham had a calf prepared for them along with curds, milk, and cakes (bread).*
- ? **What promise was affirmed in verses 9–15?** *The promise that Sarah and Abraham would have a son. This will be discussed more in the next lesson.*
- ? **Where did this promise appear earlier?** *Abram was promised by God that he would make him a great nation with many descendants (Genesis 12:2).*
- ? **Who were the three men?** *Looking ahead to 19:1 shows that two of the men were angels. The third is identified as the LORD in verses 17 and 22.*
- ? **Where were the three men headed as they left Abraham’s tent?** *To Sodom.*
- ? **What did the Lord reveal to Abraham?** *He told Abraham that he was going to Sodom to observe their wickedness. Abraham understood that Sodom’s destruction was coming, based on the following exchange with the Lord.*
- ? **What does verse 19 tell us about God’s character?** *God is righteous and just.*
- ? **In verse 25, what question did Abraham ask the Lord?** *Knowing that God is the Judge of the world and that he would do what was right, Abraham asked if God would destroy the righteous with the wicked.*
- ? **What was the conclusion of the series of questions Abraham asked of the Lord?** *If there were only 10 righteous people in Sodom, it would be spared from destruction.*

Discover the Truth

Since this promise of a son is repeated, this encounter must be within a few months of God’s last appearance (Genesis 17) when Abraham was told that he would have a son within a year.

- ? **What common response did Abraham and Sarah have when they heard the promise of a son?** *They both laughed at the idea of bearing a son in their old age—Abraham at 100 (Genesis 17:1, 17:17) and Sarah at 90 (Genesis 18:11–12).*

In Hebrew, *Isaac* means “laughter.” God had given Abraham the child’s name. As you might imagine, every time Sarah or Abraham used his name, they would be reminded that though they had doubted God’s promises in the moment, God was faithful to fulfill his promises.

Verses 1, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 22, 26, and 33 refer to one of the three men as LORD. You will probably notice in the text that “LORD” is set in small caps. Most publishers use this format to show that the Hebrew word translated in these instances is *YHWH*, or *Yahweh*, rather than *Adonai*, which is rendered “Lord,” with lowercase letters.

Since this person is also described as appearing as a man, this is understood to be an appearance of the Son before his incarnation. This is called a Christophany (also known generally as a theophany), and we will see more of these appearances as we continue studying through Scripture. We know this cannot be the Father or the Spirit since neither of these has been seen by men and neither has a body. In John 1:18 we learn that no one has seen the Father, but that Jesus has declared him to mankind.

But was this judgment that God was about to bring a righteous thing? Deuteronomy 32:4 says that God is “a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.” In order to understand God’s character, we must clearly understand what justice is, because the Bible teaches that God is just. *Refer to Attributes of God poster.*

- ❓ If a judge knew that a criminal was guilty of murder, and the criminal had confessed to the crime, but then the judge let the criminal go free without any punishment, would the judge be just? *No, he would be corrupt for not upholding the law.*

Justice is the application of the appropriate punishment for a crime. Scripture is abundantly clear when it speaks of sin and the consequences that it brings. Breaking God’s commands brings his wrath and judgment, and the ultimate penalty is an eternity in hell for those who break God’s commands.

- ❓ Knowing that every person (past, present, and future) has sinned, and knowing that God is perfectly just, what should be the fate of every person who has ever lived? *Since all have sinned, then all people should be punished by God in hell.*

Thankfully, that is not the fate of all of mankind! We also know that God is merciful.

 Slide #18

Christophany:
an appearance of the preincarnate Christ in the Old Testament

The Angels Save Lot

Let’s look at the rest of the account of Sodom and then continue to discuss God’s character.

Genesis 19:1–29

Follow along in your Bible as we listen to Genesis 19:1–29 together. *Play Genesis 19, stopping after verse 29. If you do not have a way to play the chapter, have someone read it aloud.*

- ❓ What do we learn in verse 1 about the two men who were with the Lord at Abraham’s place? *They were angels.*
- ❓ How did Lot greet the men? *He bowed before them, addressed them as “lords,” and invited them to stay with him for the night.*

 Slides #19–30

- ?** **Did Lot know they were angels?** *There is no indication that he thought they were anything more than visitors. While he addressed them as “lords,” this is a word that is often applied to men as an honorary title, much like we might say “sir” or “gentlemen.” It is from the Hebrew adon and is also translated as “master.”*
- ?** **Where did the men want to lodge for the night?** *They wanted to stay in the town square. This is presumably to fulfill their mission of observing the actions of the inhabitants.*
- ?** **How did the men of the city respond to the visitors that Lot took into his house for the night?** *They demanded that Lot hand them over.*
- ?** **What was their intent?** *They wanted the men so that they could “know them” carnally. “To know” someone is a common idiom for sexual relations. It is the same phrase used for the conception of Cain in Genesis 4:1.*
- ?** **What clue to Lot’s character is given in verse 9?** *The people said that Lot had “become the judge,” so he must have pointed out their sinful acts in the past.*
- ?** **What conflicting offer did Lot make to the men of Sodom?** *He offered to give them his two virgin daughters for their pleasure.*
- ?** **How did the angels protect the household of Lot?** *They blinded all the men of the city to deter them.*
- ?** **How did the blinded men respond?** *Even in their blindness, they continued to grope for the door, seeking the men until they became weary.*
- ?** **When morning came, what command did the angels give to Lot?** *To flee the city with his family (verses 12–13) and to not look back toward the city (verse 17).*
- ?** **What request did Lot make?** *To flee to the city of Zoar instead of to the hills.*

Lot was granted to go to the city of Zoar, to the south, and that city was spared.
- ?** **Connecting back to chapter 18, were there at least ten righteous people in the city?** *No. If there had been, God would not have sent the judgment.*
- ?** **What was the fate of the cities of the valley?** *Fire and brimstone fell from heaven, destroying the cities and their inhabitants.*
- ?** **What was the fate of Lot’s wife?** *When she turned back to look at the city, God turned her into a pillar of salt.*
- ?** **According to verse 16, how did Lot escape?** *God was merciful, and the angels seized him and his wife and daughter by the hand and led them out of the city because Lot had lingered there.*

Discover the Truth

The depravity of the residents of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities is obvious from the descriptions of the detestable acts they were willing to commit. Throughout Scripture, Sodom and Gomorrah serve as examples of wickedness and the judgment that follows from unrepentant sin. We even use the word *sodomy* to refer to sexual perversions (male

homosexual acts) today. Even though this is a sinful act, it is not beyond the grace of God to forgive (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

God’s justice was evident as the punishment was sent upon the sinful people of the cities. However, God was merciful to Lot.

- ❓ **How is mercy different from justice?** *Mercy is when you deserve a punishment for your sin, but the punishment is withheld. God is merciful when he pardons people despite their sins.*

God’s mercy toward Lot and his family was evident in removing them from the destruction of the cities. Each of the four had surely sinned, but they received God’s mercy. It was surely sinful for Lot to offer his daughters in place of the visitors he was lodging. As we look at the whole counsel of God, Lot’s character is described as righteous by Peter (2 Peter 2:7). Just like Abraham and everyone else, Lot’s righteousness could not have come from himself—it was from his faith in God. Even though he was sinful, he was considered righteous because of God’s mercy shown to him and his faith in God’s promises.

Respectable Sins Activity

Have students complete the Respectable Sins activity in their Student Guides as a personal reflection.

In our culture, people typically identify certain sins as more significant than others. No doubt some sins are more apparent and even carry stronger consequences for individuals and societies, but is murder, for example, a more damnable sin than gossip or anger? We need to make sure that we are examining these ideas from a biblical perspective.


I am going to ask you to stop and do some personal reflection about your attitude toward sin—not in others, but in your own life. Read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the Respectable Sins activity in your Student Guide. We will come back together in a few minutes and discuss the questions. *Allow time for students to write in the Student Guides.*

Connect to the Truth

- ❓ **As you consider the idea of different levels of sin, do the passages you examined put the sins described into different categories?** *No, they are all listed together without distinctions. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 lists thieves, the greedy, and swindlers alongside homosexuals and drunkards, making no distinctions. The condemnation for these acts is not inheriting the kingdom of God.*
- ❓ **Although each of us can find our own sins in these lists, do any of you tend to think of some as “acceptable” and others as absolutely detestable? On what basis do you make these distinctions?** *Allow for various answers.*

➤ Have the students turn to the Respectable Sins activity in their Student Guides. Or use the worksheet in the Teacher Digital Resources.

➤ A very beneficial book on this subject is titled *Respectable Sins* by Jerry Bridges. Consider recommending it for further study.

 Slides #31–32

Lot had been surrounded by people who were engaged in a lifestyle of gross sin. It seems that he was willing to tolerate the violation of his daughters but not the homosexual violation of the visitors. Many Christians tend to make lists of sins that they tolerate and those that make them cringe. This can be a dangerous attitude when it comes to our own growth to be more like Christ. I hope you will take some more time this week to consider whether or not your view of sins is in alignment with what Scripture reveals.

Jesus did not pay more on the cross for homosexuality or murder than he did for gossip or lust. All sin is treason against God, but we cannot forget that his justice has been satisfied by the merciful act of the Son on the cross. Though Christians deserve the wrath of God for their sin, Christ has paid the penalty, and God's mercy is shown to sinners. There is no need to fear God's judgment falling on you if you are in Christ because he has extended mercy to you. His perfect love casts out all fear of torment and judgment (Romans 8:1–2; 1 John 4:17–19). Are you living in light of the mercy of God?

Application

As we look at the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see several important ideas. First, the faithfulness of God in providing a son, Isaac, through Sarah and Abraham is an obvious fulfillment of the promise made earlier to Abraham and even earlier to Eve (Genesis 3:15). Eventually, the Seed that was promised to Abraham came as the Messiah—Jesus the Christ.

Abraham recognized God's perfect character and knew that he would not destroy Sodom on a whim. God exercised justice by destroying the cities and their inhabitants for their sinfulness, but he was also merciful. God showed mercy to Lot and his family to the point that the angels practically dragged them out of the city and let them go to a city Lot preferred.

It is certain that Lot was not a perfectly sinless man; nor were his wife and daughters free from sin. It was not because Lot was better than anyone in Sodom that he was shown mercy. If that were the case, it would not have been mercy but something that Lot had earned by his works. God's mercy toward undeserving sinners is the heart of the gospel of Christ and something all believers can rejoice in.

- ? Abraham and Sarah both laughed at the idea of having a child in their old age despite God's clear promise to them. How does knowing that God was faithful to his promise to them encourage you in your walk before the Lord? *Each of us has doubt about the circumstances in our lives, but God is faithful to all he has promised despite our shortcomings. We must put our hope in God, not in our own performance.*

 Slides #33–37

- ?** How does God’s promise of the Seed of Abraham, Jesus, demonstrate his mercy? *Jesus was sent to take the punishment for sin upon himself—the ultimate demonstration of God’s mercy for sinners. Mercy is extended to sinners who do not deserve it (Romans 5:6–8; Titus 3:3–7).*
- ?** The Bible is clear when it speaks against homosexuality as a sin. This is a topic that can spark passions in our culture. If you were sharing the gospel with someone who claims to be homosexual, how could you use 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 to minimize some of the strong emotional reaction that comes with this issue? *Using the list of sins in that passage, instead of looking at homosexuality, look at the other sins. Everyone has coveted what others have and slandered others with their speech. It isn’t the nature of the sin that condemns us before God, but the fact that it is a sin. Heterosexual fornicators and adulterers will face the same punishment apart from the forgiveness that is in Christ. The hope of the gospel can reach anyone in sin of any type. That is the good news we should proclaim and the truth pronounced in verse 11.*
- ?** Many people object, and say that eternal punishment in hell is not appropriate for the little sins that people commit on earth. Why is it just that any sin against God, from a lie to murder, is worthy of such strong punishment? *Because God is perfectly holy and infinitely righteous, any sin against him deserves an infinite punishment. Many people, including Christians, have lost sight of God’s holiness and, as a result, have compromised on the idea of his justice. This has led to their questioning the doctrine of hell, whether its duration or actual existence.*
- ?** Analogies can often help describe spiritual truths. Using the analogy of a criminal standing before a judge, how can we help others understand that God is both merciful and just? *God acts as a judge for sinners who have broken his laws. Everyone stands guilty before God, and because he is perfectly just, he must punish sin. If he did not administer the punishment, he would not be just. However, the judge can extend mercy to the condemned criminal by accepting payment for the penalty from another. If the Judge paid the penalty himself, he would be satisfying justice and showing mercy. That is what Christ has done—the Judge paid the penalty for the sins of the guilty (Romans 5:6–10).*



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his unchanging character.
- Ask God that each person would have boldness to share the hope of Christ with others.
- Thank God for his justice and mercy toward sin.
-



God's Covenant with Abram

God alone fulfills his promises.

Lesson Focus

God made a covenant with Abram, promising to give him a son and descendants as numerous as the stars. Rather than waiting for God's timing, Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands, and the result was the birth of Ishmael through Sarai's servant Hagar.

Key Passages

Genesis 15:1–21, 16:1–16

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the nature of the covenant between God and Abram.
- Describe how Abram and Sarai tried to accomplish God's promise on their own.

Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “What happens when you take matters into your own hands?”



Activity: Abram’s Error

Students will examine the Scriptures to see how Abram went wrong in not waiting for God’s timing.

Use Student Guides or print out one Abram’s Error worksheet for each student.

Optional Supplements

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 36*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Before the beginning of time, God established a plan to redeem a people for himself (Genesis 3:15). According to God's plan, this people would descend from his servant Abram. Abram would not only be the physical father of the Israelites (Genesis 12:2) but would also serve as the spiritual father of all who would come to faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 4:11). In Genesis, God's promise to Abram and his descendants—the Abrahamic Covenant—is given, confirmed, and amplified. The covenant begins in Genesis 12:1–3, where Abram is promised:

- God will make him a great nation (Genesis 12:2).
- God will bless him (Genesis 12:2).
- He will be a blessing (Genesis 12:2).
- God will bless those who bless Abram (Genesis 12:3).
- God will curse those who dishonor Abram (Genesis 12:3).
- Through Abram all nations will be blessed (Genesis 12:3).

Historical/Apologetics Background

At the time of Abram, a covenant was much more dramatic than a simple handshake. It was a sacred sign. It seems strange that God would request a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon after Abram questioned him about the land he was to inherit (Genesis 15:7–9). But this was the requirement of some ancient covenants. A promise between two individuals sometimes involved cutting animals in half and placing them on either side of a pathway. The pledging parties would walk between the freshly killed animals as a sign of the curse they were willing to accept if they reneged on their agreement—may they, too, be cut limb from limb just as these animals had been (see Jeremiah 34:18–20).

The covenant with Abram was not a typical ancient covenant; it included the God of Israel. God caused Abram to fall into a deep sleep, and after dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch

passed between the animal pieces (Genesis 15:17). While Abram slept, God himself, represented by the pot and the torch, bound himself solemnly to his promise. God alone made the commitment because God alone could fulfill it. His promises to Abraham would indeed be kept.

More and more we are confronted by a culture that refuses to believe that the Bible is God's inerrant Word, though these people rarely read or study the Word of God themselves. However, we are often able to present them with historical information and recent findings.

For example, as God described the land Abraham was soon to overcome and inhabit, he mentioned the Hittite people (Genesis 15:19–21). For many years, skeptics had discounted the accuracy of the Bible and the history of the Old Testament because of the lack of extra-biblical historical information about the Hittites. However, archaeologists in 1832

confirmed God's Word when they discovered a city that proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire, Hattusa, at modern-day Bogazkale in Turkey. Now the Hittites are accepted as a once-great civilization, and God has silenced those who would doubt him in this matter.

At one time skeptics questioned God's Word because of his statement to Abraham that his descendants would outnumber the stars of heaven and be as numerous as the sands on the seashore (Genesis 22:17). It was thought that no more than

10,000 stars existed. They did not appear to be as numerous as the sand on the seashore and certainly not more than we could count. But with the invention of powerful telescopes, today we can actually estimate the number of stars, and we know that in our galaxy alone there are over 100 billion stars.

With the reliability of the Bible increasingly under attack, it's encouraging to observe God using science and archaeology, not as enemies of his truth but as confirmation that his Word—every word—proves true (Proverbs 30:5–6).



Studying God's Word

Introduction

In the last lesson we saw God's justice and mercy demonstrated in the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram knew God's character and pleaded with him to spare the cities for the sake of the righteous—but not even 10 righteous people lived in Sodom.

God showed his mercy toward Lot and his family as the angels led them out of the city. God showed his justice in destroying the people of the cities for their wickedness.

Because God is a righteous, or just, Judge (Psalm 7:11), he must punish sin. Yet, in his mercy, he has provided Jesus to act as a substitute to take the penalty for sin on the behalf of those who place their faith in him. God has spared his children from sin's penalty through the promised Savior who came through Abram.

- Write on the board, "What happens when you take matters into your own hands?"

 Slides #1–3

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

God Promises Abram a Son and Many Descendants

Today we are stepping back to Genesis 15–16 to examine the covenant that God made with Abram. Back in Genesis 12, God had promised to make Abram a great nation, to bless him, and to bless others through him. Now, God repeats that promise and makes a covenant with Abram.

Genesis 15:1–21

Let's read Genesis 15:1–21 together. *Divide the passage (vv. 1–7, 8–16, 17–21) and have several people read each portion aloud.*

We certainly don't have time to examine the entire passage, so our questions will focus on the nature of the covenant that God made with Abram.

- ❓ How did Abram hear from God? *In a vision.*
- ❓ How did God identify himself? *As Abram's shield (v. 1).*
- ❓ What was Abram's response to God's appearance? *Abram reminded God that he did not have his own heir.*
- ❓ Who did the Lord tell Abram his heir would be? *His very own son (v. 4). Abram suggested his only heir was his servant Eliezer, but God said the heir of promise would be his own son from his own body.*
- ❓ How many offspring would Abram have? *As many as the stars (v. 5).*
- ❓ Where did Abram's righteousness come from according to verse 6? *God credited him with righteousness because he believed God.*

 Slides #4–11

- ? When Abram looked for a sign regarding inheriting the land, what did God instruct him to do? *Abram was to bring five animals, some of specific ages (v. 9).*
- ? What did Abram do with the animals? *Abram cut the heifer, goat, and ram in half and kept the birds whole. He then placed them in a row with the halves opposite each other. This would form an aisle between the two rows.*
- ? Once it was dark, what happened? *Genesis 15:12. Abram fell into a deep sleep while God talked to him. A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the halves of the animals while Abram was in a deep sleep.*
- ? How long would it be before Abram’s descendants would possess the land? *They would be strangers in a land for 400 years before possessing the land (v. 13).*
- ? What was the extent of the land they would possess? *From the river of Egypt (not the Nile) to the Euphrates (v. 18).*
- ? What figures, symbols, or practices do we need to understand or interpret from this passage? *Understanding the dividing of the animals and what the fire pot and torch represent will be important in understanding the passage.*

Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let’s talk about the main idea and try to understand this ceremony that might seem to be a bit odd to our ears.

As Abram responded to God, he reminded God, as if that were necessary, that he had no children to carry on his name and become the great nation that God had promised. God, again, used the idea that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars and that his heir would be his own son, not his servant.

Let’s examine this act of cutting the animals in half. Abram had asked for a sign—he was looking for a contract with God. When we sign a contract today, the two parties each present their names in ink in the presence of witnesses. In simpler times, a handshake was sufficient for securing a loan or purchasing some property. Other cultures exchanged items or mingled their blood together in various ceremonies before the community or elders of a town.

In Abram’s culture, they would cut animals in half and make a passageway. The two parties would walk through to signify that if they did not keep the conditions of the covenant, they deserved to be treated just like the animals—as in, you can kill me if I don’t uphold my end of the covenant. You may have heard the phrase, “to cut a covenant.” That’s what this is.

God was making a covenant, or contract, with Abram; and while Abram slept, God, in the form of a smoking fire pot and a torch, passed through the middle of the animals.

- ? Was this contract based on Abram’s performance? Did he have to keep his end of the bargain? *No. God was making a unilateral covenant with Abram.*

Abram had nothing to do but to place his faith in God's promise. This is evident in the fact that Abram did not pass between the animals, but God did so alone.

This idea reminds us of the *independence* of God—he does not need mankind, but chooses to use humans to fulfill his plans. Refer to *Independent on the Attributes of God* poster.

Apart from what God had done for Abram, or had given to him, nothing special about Abram caused God to choose him. Abram was worshipping false gods when he was called to be the father of the Israelite nation to come. We know the storyline and the outcome, but Abram didn't. He followed God, awaiting the promises. But he was not a perfect man, which we will see affirmed as we move to chapter 16.

- ? Another important point of this passage is a section that foreshadows the future of the descendants of Abram. What event is foreshadowed in verses 12–16? *The bondage of the Israelites in Egypt for 400 years before they took possession of the land of Canaan is foreshadowed. This will be examined in a later lesson.*

Abram's Impatience

Abram left Haran when he was 75 years old (Genesis 12:4). He had traveled through Canaan, had sought refuge in Egypt for a time during a drought, and had then returned to settle in Canaan. While Lot had stayed in the fertile plains, Abram had settled with his household near Hebron. Remember that we already talked about Abram's rescue of Lot, but that actually occurred after God had made the covenant with Abram (Genesis 18–19).

Genesis 16:1–16

Let's read Genesis 16:1–16 together and see how Abram and Sarai faltered in their trust of God's promise. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

 Slides #12–18

- ? What type of literature is this passage? *Historical narrative.*
- ? How long had Abram been in Canaan? *Ten years (v. 3).*
- ? How old was Abram at this point? *Since he left Haran at 75, he was 85 years old because verse 3 says he had been in Canaan for 10 years.*
- ? What was Sarai's age? *While this text doesn't tell us, we know from 17:17 that Abram was 10 years older, so Sarai would have been 75 at this time.*
- ? How long had Sarai been waiting for a child? *She had been barren her entire life (v. 11:30).*
- ? What was Sarai's proposition for providing Abram a child? *She proposed that Abram should "go in to" (v. 2) her maid, Hagar, to have a child. A common custom of the day was for a man to take a wife's servant as a concubine, or*

secondary wife. This made the child part of the household of the man. We see this same scenario played out later in Jacob's life.

- ? **How did Abram respond?** He "listened to the voice" of his wife, agreeing with her proposition.
- ? **What does "go in to" mean in this context?** This is a euphemism for sexual relations. It is repeated in verse 4 as "went in to" and echoed in "your embrace" in verse 5.
- ? **What was Hagar's ethnicity?** She was Egyptian. It is possible that Sarai took her as a servant during their time in Egypt.
- ? **How did Sarai acknowledge God's sovereignty?** She noted that God had prevented her from having children (v. 2).
- ? **How did Sarai discount God's sovereignty?** She sought to use human devices to bring about God's promise rather than wait on his timing
- ? **Did Sarai's plan succeed?** Yes, in the sense that Hagar conceived a child by Abram, but not in the sense of "obtaining a child."
- ? **What happened to the relationship between the two women after the conception?** Hagar began to despise Sarai, creating tension in the relationship.
- ? **Whom did Sarai blame for this situation?** In the phrase "may the wrong done to me be on you" in verse 5, she acknowledged her own error, but she tried to place the blame on Abram for agreeing with her and carrying out the actions. It was a form of blame-shifting.
- ? **How did Abram handle the situation?** He allowed Sarai to deal with Hagar however she pleased.
- ? **How did Sarai deal with Hagar?** She was harsh with her.
- ? **How did Hagar respond?** She fled from Sarai's presence into the wilderness, stopping at a spring on the way to Shur. This was on the way to Egypt from Hebron, so she was apparently on her way home to Egypt.
- ? **Who appeared to Hagar?** The Angel of the Lord.
- ? **What clues in the text help us understand who this angel, or messenger, was?** Because the angel used a first person pronoun in verse 10 ("I will surely multiply . . ."), and because the text says that the **LORD** (Yahweh) spoke to her and that she saw God, we can understand this to be a theophany and identify the Angel of the Lord as God the Son in pre-incarnate form.
- ? **What two names of God do we learn in this passage?** "You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees" is the Hebrew El Roi; Beer Lahai Roi is translated "well of the Living One who sees me." God is a living God who sees all things.
- ? **What three main things did the Son communicate to Hagar?** She should return and submit to Sarai, she would have a multitude of offspring, and she should name her son Ishmael.

- ❓ **Did the words of the Angel come to pass?** *Yes, verse 15 describes how the son was born and Abram named him Ishmael.*
- ❓ **Does anyone know what Ishmael's name means?** *Encourage the students to look in the margin notes or footnotes related to verse 11. Point out the root “el” in the name, which almost always refers to God. Ishmael means “God hears.” His name would be a reminder to Hagar that God heard her and responded.*
- ❓ **What function do verses 15–16 serve in the narrative?** *This is an encapsulation of the entire chapter, and serves as a time marker in the narrative. If we read on to 17:1, we learn that 13 years pass between these chapters. Here we recognize a literary feature in the text used to help the reader transition to the next account.*

Discover the Truth

For a long time God has been promising Abram a multitude of descendants. We can understand how both Abram and Sarai would be getting restless, wondering if they had missed something. We might imagine them asking if, in a senior moment, they had forgotten some part of the promise.

And, to bring about the fulfillment of the land inheritance, Abram had to get up and move. God brings about his plans through the actions of men and women throughout history. So maybe Sarai was trying to obey and Abram was thinking that God would want him to take the initiative. Under the circumstances, we can surely be sympathetic to their desire to act.

- ❓ **By seeking to have a child through Hagar, was Abram directly violating any command God had given him?** *Not necessarily. God told him that his heir would be his own son (15:4). Abram was acting to bring an heir from his own body following the legal customs of the day. However, God's design from creation was marriage to be one man and one woman, so Abram's taking another wife (Hagar) was not God's plan, though it seems God allowed polygamy during this time.*

Abram and Sarai, as faithful as they were, doubted God to some extent. Their failure to wait on God and to take matters into their own hands demonstrate this doubt. We don't see the couple looking to God in prayer and asking for his wisdom, but simply acting in their own strength to accomplish God's plans.

Of course, it's easy for us, 4,000 years removed and having the whole counsel of God to study, to pass judgment on the couple. We can see their impatience and read ahead to chapter 18 where Sarai is directly given the promise, telling ourselves that we would have done better. But would we have?

- ❓ **In what way does this scene of blame-shifting between Sarai and Abram in verse 5 harken back to the garden?** *In Genesis 3, we see Eve shifting the blame to the serpent and Adam shifting the blame to Eve—and even to God—in an attempt to remove the consequences of their actions. This is what plays out as Sarai blames Abram and seeks relief from the consequences of her actions.*

Abram and Sarai were humans with a sinful nature. If we are honest, I bet each of us can look in our own hearts and understand their temptation to do things in their own strength and in their own timing. But even in the midst of our failures, we know that we can admit our sin to God and find perfect forgiveness in our perfect Savior.

- Have the students turn to the Abram's Error activity in their Student Guides. Or use the worksheet in the Teacher Digital Resources.

 Slides #19–22

Abram's Error Activity

As we consider Abram's actions, no doubt his intent was to bring about the promise God had given him. He wasn't violating a direct command from God (as far as we know from the text), and it probably seemed to him that he was acting in a way that would bring about God's promise. So where did he go wrong? Answer the questions in your Student Guide in the "Abram's Error" activity to see if you can understand this idea better.

Have the students work in small groups or do the activity as a large group.

Connect to the Truth

- ? Let's think about these questions together.
- ? 1. What action had Abram previously taken that demonstrated his lack of trust in God's promise of an heir? (Take a look at Genesis 12:10–13 if you need to.) *Abram had lied to Pharaoh about Sarai being his wife, fearing that he would be killed for her sake. In this act, he was not trusting that God would give him the land and a son since he believed he would be killed. Dead men can't inherit a land or have a son.*
- ? 2. What part of God's created order did Abram violate in trying to bring an heir into the world through Hagar? *God intended marriage to be one man and one woman. It seems that they bowed to the culturally accepted practice of producing an heir through a second wife rather than trusting God to provide through their legitimate marriage.*
- ? 3. Abram allowed Sarai to do whatever she wanted after Hagar conceived. What consequence might have happened had God not intervened and told Hagar to return? *Abram probably didn't think this through very well. Had Hagar returned to Egypt, his son may have been lost to him. The son he believed was the promised heir may have been lost without God's intervention (though Ishmael was not the son of promise).*
- ? 4. How would you explain how Abram went wrong in not waiting for God's timing? *Abram and Sarai sought to bring about God's plan in their own timing and by their own methods rather than waiting on God's timing and trusting him to bring about these promises.*

So, let's not be too hard on Abram and Sarai since I doubt any of us would have done better. However, we do have them as an example of what to not do. This account gives us a reminder that we should seek God's wisdom by prayer and counsel as we consider our actions. We

shouldn't think of our life as a puzzle that we have to solve so that we know exactly what God wants us to do. We need to seek God's wisdom through prayer and studying his Word, and through godly counsel, taking action under the guidance of the Spirit and trusting in God's power to fulfill his promises. And we must be sure that we never act sinfully to try and bring about what we believe God's will to be.

Application

I hope that you can see how God has orchestrated his plan to bring salvation to all nations. Rather than providing a plan that depended on Abram keeping his half of the contract, God was pleased to guarantee the completion of his promise to Abram based solely on what God would do. This should give us great confidence. In the same way, our salvation was orchestrated by God, not us.

If you know the history from Abram forward to Jesus, you know there were many times where the people who were in the line of Jesus messed up. They made sinful choices and there were many consequences. But God didn't change. His plan was in place, and he worked through many broken vessels to bring about his promise in the person of Jesus Christ. God is independent and faithful. He uses men and women to accomplish his plans, even when they disobey or try to do things their own way.

God used Abram's error in his plan of history. We are sure to make mistakes in our own lives. Even when we think we are doing what is right, things can go wrong. But God redeems these things and uses them to conform us to the image of his Son (Romans 8:28-30). As we seek to grow in wisdom, patience, and trust, God is pleased to use us. We need to be careful to not act in our own strength, but trust that God will bring about his promises as we walk faithfully in obedience to him.

Abram was given a very direct revelation from God and a very specific promise, but the promises for us are different. No passage in Scripture promises you, by name, that you will have a son or inherit a certain property. But there are many promises God has given to us. In Philippians 1:6 we are promised that God will complete the work of salvation he has begun in us, but he doesn't tell us all the details of how he will do that. We know Christ will return to restore all things, but we don't know exactly when and how all the details will play out. How to act in the meantime is the question that requires study, fellowship, prayer, and walking in step with the Holy Spirit.

I hope this lesson has reminded you how much God has done for us through Abram and, ultimately, through Christ. Let's think about how we can take what we have learned today and apply it to our lives as we seek to become more like Christ.

 Slides #23-27

- ? What truth from the Scriptures we looked at today has helped you see God’s grace in the account of Abram?** *Accept various answers, but try to draw attention to how God showed Abram kindness apart from any goodness in Abram—it was God’s free gift to him. Even when Abram made mistakes, God was pleased to redeem those mistakes.*
- ? How does knowing that God is unchanging and absolutely faithful give you peace and assurance of your salvation (if you have trusted in Christ’s work)?** *If God is faithful to his promises to forgive us of our sins, then we have no fear that this will ever change. The immutability of God offers us great security and assurance.*
- ? What does it mean to “wait on God” and his timing? Why is this so challenging at a practical level?** *Discuss various answers. To wait on God is to have a certain hope that God will fulfill his promises, but not know his timing or exact methods. We are prone to want things to happen quickly to improve our circumstances, so we act in our own strength. We know we are called to live our lives and not just sit around and do nothing, so it can sometimes be difficult to discern how to act and when.*
- ? In what areas of your life do you find it hard to wait on God’s timing?** *Discuss various answers and allow people to share their struggles. This could be an opportunity to pray for one another. Common issues may be: infertility, marriage, jobs, schooling, suffering through an illness or disability, etc.*
- ? How do we maintain hope in the midst of circumstances where God seems to have forgotten us?** *Discuss various answers. Focus on the God who sees (El Roi) and knows our circumstances and the promises he has given us. God is faithful to fulfill his promises and all-powerful to do so. Consider reading Psalm 27 as an example of waiting on God while trusting in him.*



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his unchanging character and his faithfulness to fulfill his promises.
- Ask God for wisdom and boldness to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Christ.
- Thank God for giving us his Spirit to guide us in truth.



Isaac: Child of Promise

*God's covenant with Abraham
continued through his son Isaac.*

Lesson Focus

God confirmed his covenant with Abram. God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah. Even though Abraham thought Ishmael would fulfill God's promises, God miraculously gave Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. Isaac was the promised child who would inherit God's covenant with Abraham.

Key Passages

Genesis 17:1–27, 21:1–21; Galatians 3:16

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe God's faithfulness in keeping his promise to Abraham.
- Identify the descendant of Abraham who would bless all nations.

Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “Who is the Seed promised to Abram?”



Studying God's Word

For the Abram's Seed activity, use Student Guides or print the worksheet from the Teacher Digital Resources.

Optional Supplements

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 37*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Thirteen years had passed since Abram and Sarai tried to fulfill God's promise of a descendant through human means. Sarai gave her servant Hagar to Abram, and Abram and Hagar had a son, Ishmael. When God appeared to Abram at the beginning of Genesis 17, he identified himself as El Shaddai, which is translated "Almighty God." This name also includes sovereignty and kingship. God confirmed his covenant with Abram and changed his name from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). God also changed the name of Sarai (my princess) to Sarah (princess). God said Abraham would have many descendants who would inherit the land of Canaan. He also instituted circumcision for Abraham and his descendants as a sign of his covenant (Genesis 17:10–14). When God told Abraham that Sarah would bear a child at age 90, Abraham laughed. He then asked God if Ishmael was the promised son. God replied that Sarah would bear a son named Isaac, who would inherit the covenant. However, God blessed Ishmael for Abraham's sake and said that Ishmael's descendants would also become a great nation. Abraham, Ishmael, and the rest of the males in his house were circumcised in obedience to God's command (Genesis 17:23–27).

Historical/Apologetics Background

The two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, illustrate the consequences of sin and the mercy of God. Abraham and Sarah are both commended in the Bible for their faith (Hebrews 11:8–19), but they made mistakes. They got impatient waiting for a son, and Sarah thought that Abraham's line could continue through her servant Hagar. From the time Hagar found out that she was pregnant by Abraham, trouble began. Hagar despised Sarah, and Sarah responded by mistreating her. Hagar ran away, and God met her in the wilderness and instructed her to return to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 16:7–9). Hagar obeyed and gave birth to Ishmael, whose name means "God hears," because God heard Hagar's affliction (Genesis 16:11). When God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 17, he specifically said that Sarah

Following Genesis 17, several events occurred before the birth of Isaac in chapter 21. God and two angels appeared as men to visit Abraham. God again told Abraham that Sarah would have a son. Sarah laughed in doubt when she heard this and then denied that she'd laughed when the Lord confronted her unbelief (Genesis 18:10–15). Then the Lord told Abraham his plan to bring judgment on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19 recounts the angels entering the wicked city of Sodom to save Lot and his family before the Lord rained fire and brimstone on the cities to destroy them for their sin. Then Abraham journeyed south to Gerar. In fear for his life, Abraham lied to king Abimelech and said Sarah was his sister and not his wife. This led to Sarah being taken into Abimelech's household. God intervened to spare Sarah and restore her to Abraham.

In Genesis 21, we see the Lord visiting Sarah to enable her to conceive, just as he had promised. She bore a son at the time God had said. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. They named their son Isaac, which means *laughter*. Finally, the child of promise arrived! Isaac would inherit all the wonderful promises God had made to Abraham, including the promise of a Savior, Jesus, who would come from his descendants (Galatians 3:16).

would have a son and become a mother of nations (Genesis 17:16). God also made it clear that Ishmael was not the promised son, but God was merciful and blessed Ishmael for Abraham's sake.

The family conflict continued after Isaac was born. When Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking at the feast, and she told Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. She wanted no competition for her son as the heir. This was troubling to Abraham, who loved Ishmael, but God said to send them away. Abraham complied, and Hagar and Ishmael departed. God provided water for them in the wilderness and watched over them. Ishmael became an archer and eventually married an Egyptian (Genesis 21:20–21). He and his descendants remained in Arabia and multiplied just as God had promised.

While God was faithful to fulfill his promises to make both sons into great nations, Abraham's family conflict grew into national conflict. This was a consequence of Abraham and Sarah taking matters into their own hands instead of waiting for God's timing. Today, we see the conflict continuing between some of the descendants of Ishmael, the Arab people, and the descendants of Isaac, the Jewish people. Middle Eastern conflicts often take center stage in world politics and force other nations to take sides.

As Christians, we know that God will accomplish his perfect will for the nation of Israel (and the rest of the world). He is in control of events that will lead to the fulfillment of his Word. We should

not be alarmed or anxious when we hear of conflict and unrest, for those are signs of Jesus' soon return. Jesus said in Mark 13:7-8, "And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains." Conflict will continue until Jesus comes again, but now is the time of mercy—the time for people to be saved. Let us work for the Lord in light of his return when he will abolish the curse and establish his righteous reign.



Studying God's Word

Introduction


- ? In last week's lesson, we looked at the covenant God made with Abram. What made that covenant different from a typical covenant made between two people? *God made a unilateral promise that was not based on Abram's performance, but on God's promise alone.*

The New Testament confirms many times that it was not Abram's good works that made him righteous, but it was his faith in God's promises that was counted as his righteousness (Hebrews 11:8–12).

- ? If not from his works, where did Abraham's righteousness come from? *It was righteousness from God through faith. This is similar to the discussion in a previous lesson of Noah's righteousness. Ultimately, Christ's righteousness is imputed to all who trust God for salvation. We see examples of Abram's sin in the text as well as examples of his acting in faith. His righteousness could not have come from himself.*

God made promises to Abram; he promised to make him a great nation, and he promised that all of the nations of the world would be blessed through him. The son of promise was not yet born, so the promise was still awaiting its fulfillment. Abram and Sarai tried to fulfill the promise in their own strength rather than waiting on God's timing. We have all experienced the consequences of doing things in our own strength. Abram and Sarai experienced those consequences in the strife surrounding the strained relationship with Hagar and the birth of Ishmael.

Today, we are going to look at how God reassured Abram of the covenant and then brought it to its fulfillment, both immediately and in the future. While we look at these Old Testament accounts, we want to make sure that we look forward to their New Testament fulfillment.

 Slides #1–3

- Write on the board, "Who is the Seed promised to Abram?"

God Confirms His Covenant

Chapter 17 carries us forward 13 years to when Abram was 99 years old. God spoke to Abram and affirmed his promise of an heir and of the land of Canaan. God commanded Abram to mark this covenant with a physical sign—the circumcision of all of the males of his household and his descendants. This would be a physical reminder of the covenant.

Genesis 17:1–27

Let's read all of Genesis 17 together and see how God continued to reveal his plans to Abram. *Have someone read the passage aloud. Consider dividing it into sections 1–8, 9–16, and 17–27.*

- ? What type of literature is this passage? *Historical narrative.*

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

 Slides #4–15

► Take time to understand the timing of the events since large amounts of time often pass between chapters in the books of history.

- ? **How old is Abram at this point?** *99 years old.*
- ? **How did God identify himself?** *I am God Almighty; El Shaddai.*
- ? **How did Abram respond to God's appearance?** *He fell on his face.*
- ? **What did God reaffirm in verse 4?** *Abram would be a father of a multitude of nations as God had promised.*
- ? **What significant change occurred in verse 5?** *God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude."*
- ? **How long will the covenant between God and Abraham's descendants last?** *It is an everlasting covenant (v. 7).*
- ? **What aspect of the covenant was revisited in verse 8?** *The land would be given to his descendants.*
- ? **What sign of the covenant was given to Abraham?** *All of the males of his descendants were to be circumcised in their foreskin (vv. 8–14). As time allows, you may review some of the details of the covenant and who was to be circumcised.*
- ? **How long was this to be the sign of the covenant?** *It was an everlasting covenant (v. 13).*
- ? **How did Sarai's name change?** *Her name was changed to Sarah, which means "princess."*
- ? **What promise was given to Sarah when God changed her name?** *God promised to give her a child and to make her the mother of nations, so the name princess would be appropriate.*
- ? **How did Abraham respond to God's words (v. 17)?** *He laughed and questioned, in his mind, whether a 100-year-old man and 90-year-old woman could bear a child. Note that he is rounding his age since he was 99 according to the opening verse.*
- ? **What did Abraham propose to God?** *That Ishmael might be the heir.*
- ? **What was God's response?** *He confirmed that Sarah would have a child.*
- ? **What would be the child's name?** *Isaac.*
- ? **When would Isaac be born?** *One year from that time.*
- ? **What promise did God give to Ishmael (v. 20)?** *He would have 12 sons, and they would be princes. Compare to Genesis 25:13–18 if time allows.*
- ? **How was Isaac connected to the covenant?** *God made it clear that the descendants of the covenant were to come through Isaac (v. 19) and not Ishmael (v. 20).*
- ? **How did Abraham demonstrate his faith in God's promise?** *He was circumcised along with all of the males of his household.*
- ? **Had God's promise changed since it was first revealed to Abram?** *No, but it had become more specific.*

Discover the Truth

God had been steadfast in keeping his promise to this point. As we look back 4,000 years to Abraham's time, we see that God is *immutable*—he never changes. Knowing that the God who fulfilled these promises to Abraham will do the same for us should give us great hope. We read throughout Scripture that God is unchanging, and we see that truth in the account of Abraham and the fulfillment of the covenant. God is always *faithful* to his promises—he cannot lie or deny his own nature. Refer to these attributes on the *Attributes of God* poster.

Abraham had been waiting 13 years since God had spoken the last promise to him, but now he was told that within a year he would have the son of promise—Isaac.

Sarai's name was changed to *Sarah*, meaning “princess,” as a sign of her role as the mother of the descendants of the nation of Israel (Genesis 17:15). At 90, she was to become the mother of a child. This child was to be the son of the promises that God had made to Abraham.

God had made a covenant with Abraham and had placed no conditions on Abraham—God was going to keep his end, regardless of Abraham's fleeting doubts that a child could be born to aged parents. God had purposed before he created the universe that he would provide salvation for the fallen human race through Abraham's Seed.

Isaac Is Born

We are going to move to Genesis 21 and the account of Isaac's birth. But let's remember what ground we have already covered. After this reaffirmation of the covenant, chapters 18–19 give the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. During his visit, the Lord had affirmed that Sarah would be pregnant and have a child in “the time of life” (18:10). The time that passes between chapter 17 and 18 must be only a few months since the birth was promised within a year.

Chapter 20 recounts a short stay in the south where Abraham and Sarah repeated the lie they had told Pharaoh, Abimelech being on the receiving end this time. Again, we see the character flaws in these individuals, not just glowing reports. So let's look at the text. Refer to the *History of Genesis timeline* to review the timing of these events.

Genesis 21:1–21

Let's read Genesis 21:1–21 together. Divide the passage for class members to read aloud: 1–13 and 14–21.

 Slides #16–23

- ? Who is the focus of the actions in verse 1? *The Lord.*
- ? What word or concept is repeated in verses 1–4? *As he “had said/promised/commanded/spoken” is repeated four times.*

- ? What does the repetition in verses 1–4 communicate?** *God's act of keeping his promise is restated in two different ways, likely to make it clear that he is faithful to his promise exactly as he had said or spoken.*
- ? What truth is repeated in verses 2–3?** *The son was born to Sarah and Abraham.*
- ? What does this repetition confirm?** *This confirms that Isaac was indeed the son of promise, not Ishmael. God had said Sarah would bear a son, and she did.*
- ? Where does the child's name come from?** *The name was given to Abraham by God.*
- ? How did Abraham bring Isaac into the covenant?** *He circumcised him on the eighth day as God had directed.*
- ? What past events did Sarah recall in verse 6?** *By referring to laughter, she likely had in mind her laughter in the tent when she heard the Lord's promise of a child (18:12). She may have also known of Abraham's laughter at the promise.*
- ? Why was this laughter significant?** *Isaac means "laughter" in Hebrew, so his name would be a reminder of God's faithfulness even in their old age (vv. 6–7).*
- ? When did the strife between Sarah and Hagar emerge again?** *When Isaac was 2–3 years old and a feast was held to honor his weaning, Ishmael scoffed at his brother. This rekindled the animosity between Hagar and Sarah.*
- ? What was Sarah afraid of?** *Likely, she was afraid Ishmael would take Isaac's inheritance (v. 10) since Ishmael was the eldest and should receive the inheritance (culturally speaking).*
- ? What did Sarah propose?** *She asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away.*
- ? Why did this grieve Abraham?** *Ishmael was his son, and he did not want to lose him.*
- ? How old was Ishmael at this time?** *He would have been about 14 since Abraham was then 100, and 16:15–16 tells us that he was 86 when Ishmael was born.*
- ? How did Abraham send them off?** *He provided a skin of water and bread to them, a meager ration.*
- ? Where did the two head?** *They went into the wilderness of Beersheba, south of Canaan.*
- ? What did God rescue the two from?** *They had run out of water in this desert, so God rescued them from death.*
- ? Where have we seen a similar encounter before?** *A similar thing had happened when Hagar had been kicked out of the household, the Angel of God appearing to her in her distress.*
- ? What promise did God confirm to Hagar?** *God confirmed that Ishmael would become a great nation, as he had promised to Abraham before.*
- ? How did God rescue them?** *He pointed them to a well where they received water and were refreshed.*
- ? What do we learn about God's relationship to Ishmael?** *"God was with the boy" (v. 20), faithful to keep his promise.*

- ? Where did they live after that? *They lived in the wilderness of Paran, an area of the northern Arabian Peninsula.*
- ? Where did Ishmael find a wife? *His wife was from Egypt.*

Discover the Truth

Abraham and Sarah received the promise from the Lord—Isaac was born to them in their old age. God affirmed that Isaac was indeed the son of promise. But Ishmael also received blessings from God. If you look ahead to Genesis 25:12–18, you will see the princes who came from Ishmael and the lands God gave them. *Do so if time allows.* These tribes will intersect the narrative again as we talk about Joseph’s captivity (he was sold to Ishmaelite traders).

But Isaac was the one through whom the covenant of blessing would come. God had a plan of redemption to carry out through these human agents. He had made this promise 2,000 years earlier and would surely be faithful to keep it.

We are going to do an activity to help us connect what we are reading in these Old Testament passages to the New Testament’s expanded revelation of that plan.

Abram’s Seed Activity

Have the students break into small groups and answer the questions in their Student Guides. Romans 4:1–5:2 and Galatians 3:1–18 will be examined.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see glimpses of the Messiah whom we know as Jesus. In Genesis 3, we saw the promise of the Seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent. Here, in the account of Abraham, we see another promise of a descendant whom God will use to bless all nations.

We are going to use a few New Testament passages to help us more fully understand the promises that were given to Abram and how they extend to us today. In small groups, work through these questions, and we will discuss them in a few minutes. *Allow students time to complete the activity.*

Connect to the Truth

- ? In the two passages from Romans and Galatians, the faith of Abraham is described and connected to Jesus. What did these passages say about the connection between faith, works, and righteousness? *Works, even by keeping the law, cannot earn righteousness; it is only through faith in God and his promises that we can be considered righteous.*
- ? That is one thread through both of those passages, but another thread draws the work of Christ into the picture. How is it that Abraham, each

► Have the students turn to the Abram’s Seed activity in their Student Guides. Or use the worksheet in the Teacher Digital Resources.

 Slides #24–25

of us, and people from all nations find a blessing in the work of Christ? *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of working for righteousness (Galatians 3:13) by his perfect life, and that righteousness is credited to us by faith in Christ (Romans 4:23–5:2).*

That is the basis for the glorious doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone, and it gives us great reason to praise God for his kindness to us through Christ.

The gospel, the good news of salvation, was preached to Abram when he was told that all nations would be blessed through him. This is very clear from Galatians 3:8. Abram was saved from his sins in the same way that we are—through Christ. He was looking forward to a coming Messiah. We look back on what the Messiah has already done. Abraham’s offspring, or Seed, was Christ, and it is in Christ that the nations are blessed.

In either case, all people are justified by faith in the promises of God. Not only do we know that our sins can be forgiven because Christ bore those sins on the cross, but we can be seen as righteous before God because of the perfect life he lived here on this earth. We don’t get a slate that is wiped clean, but a clean slate that has the merits of Christ written on it. God sees his Son’s righteousness when he looks at those who have trusted in Christ for forgiveness. This is called the imputed righteousness of Christ—his goodness is credited to our account when we trust in his work on the cross by faith.

Application

We know that God is faithful to his promises. He had promised to give Abraham a son, and he fulfilled that promise in his own timing. Through Abraham all nations would receive a blessing. Specifically, God sent Jesus through Isaac’s descendants to bless all nations with the hope of the gospel.

Salvation comes by God’s grace through faith, not by works of righteousness that we have done (Titus 3:4–7). Just like Abraham, when we turn to God in faith we can look forward to eternity in the city whose maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). God is faithful and will fulfill the promises he has made to his children. Abraham is a great example of that sure hope and the faithfulness of God. Even in his stumbling, seeking to bring about God’s plan in his own strength, Abraham can still be called righteous—not because of his actions, but because of his faith. As we stumble and sin through our thoughts or actions, we have the same hope Abraham did—Jesus Christ is our righteousness.

Let us make sure that we think of how we can apply these ideas as we leave and go out into the world we live in. We want to make sure that we are not merely hearing the Word, but seeking to be doers of what we read in it.

- ?** How has your view of earning righteousness changed in light of the passages we have looked at today? *Many people mistakenly believe that people who lived on earth before Christ had to earn their righteousness, but it is clear from Abraham's account that righteousness comes only through faith in Christ.*
- ?** As you share the gospel with others, you will likely encounter people who claim that they are good people and that God will accept them based on all the good things they have done or because their good deeds outnumber their bad deeds. How could you use Abraham to help them understand the error of their thinking? *Abraham's righteousness was based on his faith in God's promises, not his good works. Christ is responsible for our righteousness, and it has nothing to do with our good deeds. We must help people to recognize the error of trusting in their own goodness and instead encourage them to look to Christ alone. It is only in him that our sins can be removed from our account and his righteousness credited to us.*
- ?** In what way do we see God's promise of giving Abraham a son fulfilled in multiple persons? How does this help us understand other prophecies in the Bible? *Abraham was promised a son as well as a great number of descendants, one of whom would bless all nations. Isaac is the immediate fulfillment, but the ultimate fulfillment is Jesus, born 2,000 years later. Many prophecies in the Bible have both immediate and future aspects, so we need to be aware of this as we study Scripture. This will allow us to understand God's Word more fully.*
- ?** What dangerous traps do we tend to fall into when we begin thinking that our works can or have earned us a righteous standing before God? *This is ultimately a denial of the gospel, and we call into question the efficacy and necessity of Christ's work on our behalf. We may also fall into legalism, adding manmade traditions to the simplicity of the gospel (as the Galatians had done by listening to the Judaizers who added circumcision to the gospel). We may also begin to believe that we lose favor with God rather than turning to him through Christ and seeking forgiveness for our sins (1 John 1:8–9).*
- ?** Why is adding some type of work to the gospel so appealing to us? *Discuss answers. We often think that we must do some form of penance or contribute to good things that we receive from others, but salvation is a gift from God and has nothing to do with our works. We want to feel like we have contributed to our receiving such a profound blessing.*
- ?** Can you recognize any areas in your life right now where you are waiting on God's timing? How can you continue to trust God in this situation? *Discuss various answers. Encourage the students to consider the*

faithfulness of God and to trust in his wise plan. Use this as an opportunity to pray for individuals.



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his faithfulness and unchanging character.
- Ask God for faith and patience as we wait for him to fulfill his promises.
- Thank God for the opportunity to trust in him and for the gift of salvation in Christ.



Abraham's Test

Abraham loved God more than he loved his promised child, Isaac.

Lesson Focus

God called Abraham to offer Isaac, the son of promise, as a sacrifice. Abraham acted in faith, obeyed God, and continued to trust his promise. In the end, God provided a ram in Isaac's place. We see in this account a foreshadowing of Christ and the salvation God promises through him.

Key Passages

Genesis 22:1–19; Hebrews 11:17–19

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Abraham demonstrated his faith and trust in God.
- Compare the sacrifice of Isaac and the ram to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
- Trace the promise of the Messiah through history.

Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “How does Isaac represent Jesus Christ?”



Studying God's Word

Print and cut apart one copy of the Scripture strips. Hand these to various students as they arrive.

For the From the Seed to the Lamb activity, print the worksheet from the Teacher Digital Resources.

Optional Supplements

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 38*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

“The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised” (Genesis 21:1). God kept his promise of a son for Abraham and Sarah and fulfilled the covenant and promise previously made to Abraham (Genesis 17:7). This was the child of promise. It was through his seed that the line of the Messiah would come.

Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5). And he celebrated the birth of this long-awaited son (Genesis 21:8). But this celebration would quickly turn somber.

Genesis 22 records one of the most moving accounts in the Old Testament. God determined in his wisdom to test the faith of Abraham: “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Genesis 22:2). How heartbreaking this must have been! Yet Abraham, demonstrating his complete confidence in God, on the very next morning, saddled his donkey, took his son, his servants, and the wood for the burnt offering, and began his journey (Genesis 22:3).

The faith and obedience shown by Abraham is seldom seen more vividly than it is during this test. He demonstrated it when he spoke to his servants, “I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you” (Genesis 22:5). This statement—that they would come back—revealed that Abraham believed God would keep his word and if necessary, bring his son back to life (Hebrews 11:17–19). Again, Abraham exhibited amazing faith when, as the trip

Historical/Apologetics Background

As we consider the amazing display of obedience in Abraham and the merciful intervention of our holy God, we also see God’s omniscience and sovereignty as he weaves his plan of redemption in Jesus Christ throughout all of Scripture. This account of Abraham and Isaac is just one such example.

When God called Abraham to Mount Moriah, he knew exactly what would occur in this sacred place in the future. Years later, in this same region, God

neared its conclusion, Isaac asked his father, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Genesis 22:7). Abraham replied, “God will provide for himself the lamb” (Genesis 22:8). Abraham was fully prepared to obey and offer his son, but it also appears that somehow he knew the principle of substitutionary sacrifice—and that is where his hope was. Perhaps he had heard the record of Adam’s sin and how God had covered their nakedness and shame with the skins of the dead animals in the garden.

On the mountaintop, the moment came: Isaac was on the altar built by his own father; Abraham raised the knife to present to God the ultimate act of obedience—the death of this precious son promised so long ago (Genesis 22:9–10). Then the angel of the Lord called, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Genesis 22:12). Abraham had passed the test. His trust was absolute, his obedience complete. And God provided a ram for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:13). Here the angel of the Lord confirmed again the Abrahamic Covenant—the land, the descendants, and the blessings that would be fulfilled through Abraham (Genesis 22:15–18).

How blessed we are to see in this historical account a clear foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice, provided by God himself—Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)! He alone is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing (Revelation 5:12)! He is the only one able to offer forgiveness and hope for eternity to all who will sincerely repent of their sins and turn to him in total trust and obedience.

would appear to David and stop the plague that would beset Israel in retribution for David’s disobedience against God (1 Chronicles 21:14–15). Later, near this mountain, David’s son Solomon would build the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 3:1) where God would allow limited access into the most holy place by the high priest—once a year—into his presence (Leviticus 16:2). And then, in the culmination of God’s eternal plan, Jesus Christ himself would

be offered near this place as the perfect sacrifice and final atonement for the sins of everyone who would believe.

The significance of this demands reverence toward our all-knowing God. For on this mountain, where God provided a ram for Isaac as his sacrifice—God also provided the only Lamb whose blood is able to ransom a people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9).

We know that the actual Abrahamic Covenant included Abraham's leaving his family and his home and journeying to a place the Lord would show him. God also promised a great nation, a great name, and many blessings (Genesis 12:1–2). The culmination of this covenant would be the birth of Jesus Christ—a descendant of Abraham—the one through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 18:18).

However, this covenant was foreshadowed at the very beginning—in the garden of Eden. Even as God was pronouncing the curse, he was also offering the hope of victory over death and sin. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Below is a brief glimpse of the history of this amazing covenant:

- Genesis 3:15 God promised a Redeemer in the garden of Eden

- Genesis 12:1–3 God presented his covenant to Abram
- Genesis 12:4–5 Abram and his family began their journey
- Genesis 17:1–27 God changed Abram's name to Abraham and promised him a son
- Genesis 26:3–5 God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham's son—Isaac
- Genesis 28:13–15 God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to Isaac's descendant—Jacob
- Genesis 45:7–8 God preserved the people of Israel and led them to Egypt through Jacob's descendant—Joseph
- Genesis 49:10 The Messiah was promised through another of Jacob's descendants—Judah
- 1 Chronicles 2:1–15 King David descended from the tribe of Judah
- 2 Samuel 7:1–17 The Davidic Covenant was established—the line of David would rule forever
- Luke 1:31–33 Jesus will receive the throne of David and will reign over the house of Jacob forever

Do you see God's faithfulness, omniscience, mercy, grace, and sovereignty through this historical account encompassing thousands of years and woven perfectly throughout the history of the world? We serve an awesome God. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever” (Romans 11:36).



Studying God's Word

Introduction

In the last lesson, we saw God's faithfulness on display as he reaffirmed his covenant with Abraham.

- ? What significant changes happened in our study of chapter 17? *Abram's name was changed to Abraham, and Sarai's name was changed to Sarah.*
- ? Did anything about the covenant change? *No, God was faithful to his original promise of a land, a son, and a nation to come from Abraham.*
- ? What sign did God give Abraham to mark the covenant? *All of the males were to be circumcised.*

As Isaac was born to the aged parents, God showed his power over nature and his faithfulness to fulfill his promises. Just as the birth of Ishmael brought strife into the household, Isaac's birth rekindled that conflict, and Hagar and Ishmael were kicked out of Abraham's household. Even though they were removed, God still kept his promise to make Ishmael a prince and father of many, and his descendants will show up in future lessons.

Today, we are going to continue to examine God's faithfulness to fulfill the promises made to Abraham. Isaac, the son of promise, comes into sharper focus in today's narrative. Abraham's faith will be tested, and we will see a shadow of Christ appear once again.

 Slides #1-3

- Write on the board, "How does Isaac represent Jesus Christ?"
- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.


Abraham's Test

As God had promised, Isaac was born to Sarah and Abraham. Let us pick up the reading in Genesis 22. Isaac was about 25 years old and was living with Abraham and Sarah at Beersheba. They had lived for a time in the land of the Philistines (21:22-34), but had returned to Canaan.

Genesis 22:1-19

Let's read Genesis 22:1-19 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? What did God ask Abraham to do? *Abraham was told to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on a mountain in the land of Moriah.*
- ? What was the purpose of God's command? *To test Abraham.*
- ? When did Abraham act on God's command? *Early the next morning.*
- ? Who traveled with Abraham? *Isaac and two servants.*
- ? How long did the journey take? *Three days.*
- ? As they arrived in Moriah, what did Abraham tell the servants? *Abraham told them to stay with the donkey, and that he and Isaac would return after they worshipped.*

 Slides #4-12

- Pass out the Scripture Strips, and ask each person to mark that spot in their Bible and be prepared to read it later in the lesson.

- ? **What was taken to the sacrifice?** *Abraham took the fire and the knife, and Isaac carried the wood they had split.*
- ? **What did Isaac notice was missing?** *The lamb for the offering.*
- ? **In response to Isaac, how did Abraham express his faith in God’s promise?** *Abraham assured Isaac that God would provide the lamb.*
- ? **At what point did God intervene in the act of sacrificing?** *Isaac had been bound and placed on the altar. As Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son, the angel of the Lord, Jesus, spoke and stopped him.*
- ? **How did God provide a replacement for the sacrifice?** *A ram, caught by its horns in a thicket, was offered in Isaac’s place.*
- ? **How did Abraham name the place of the sacrifice?** *He called it “The LORD will provide” (Jehovah-jireh).*
- ? **What phrase is repeated three times (verses 2, 12, and 16)?** *“. . . your son, your only son.” God recognized that Isaac was Abraham’s only son.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *God tested Abraham’s faith by calling him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham was obedient to God, trusting in his promises.*
- ? **What does the passage tell us about God?** *God is faithful to provide when he has called his children to obey, even in unusual and difficult circumstances. This is evident by the fact that the name of the place is, “The Lord Will Provide,” and from the text we will look at next in Hebrews 11.*

Discover the Truth

Abraham demonstrated his faith in God by his obedience, and God reaffirmed his covenant with Abraham. As is often the case, a New Testament passage gives us more insight into this episode.

Hebrews 11:17–19

Turn to Hebrews 11 and listen as I read verses 17–19. *Read the passage.*

- ? **What additional information does this passage give us about Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac—the son of promise?** *Abraham knew that God would fulfill his promise to make a great nation from Isaac, so Abraham concluded that God could raise him from the dead after he had been sacrificed.*

Abraham had such solid faith that God would keep his promises that he obeyed the command that would have seemingly ended the promise God had made. If the son of promise was dead, the promise could not have been fulfilled. But God will never ask us to do something that runs contrary to his plans—Abraham knew this to be true by his faith and by his having experienced God’s faithfulness in the past. This is the kind of faith that we should all seek to have—full assurance of God’s promises.

 Slide #13

From the Seed to the Lamb Activity

Pass out the worksheets.

Once again, God had confirmed his promise for the offspring, or seed, of Abraham to inherit the land of Canaan, to produce a great multitude of offspring, and to bless all nations. As we saw in Galatians 3 a few weeks ago, that blessing was ultimately fulfilled in Christ's work on the cross. In Acts 3, Peter also used this passage (Genesis 22:18) to explain the blessings of Christ.

Use the information on this worksheet to trace the promise from the Seed of the woman in Genesis 3 to the arrival of baby Jesus and on to the Lamb on the throne in the book of Revelation.

At each of the references, write the next reference in the margin of your Bible with some sort of symbol or word that will remind you of this reference's meaning. This will create a thread through your Bible, connecting the promise of the Messiah through the ages of history and even into the future.

If you are short on time, allow the students to work for a short time and then encourage them to finish the activity on their own.

Connect to the Truth

Understanding how biblical events are related to one another is an important part of Bible study. That is why we have been using the Seven C's of History timeline to help frame our study through the Bible. I trust that as you continue to study Scripture, you will find more connections and add them to this short list.

I also hope that it is very obvious that God's faithfulness is evident throughout the Bible. The gospel message of the need for a Savior to remove the curse of sin is not something that is limited to the New Testament—it is present through the entirety of the Bible.

Application

As we recap our lesson for today, we are also going to make some more connections between the account of Abraham and Isaac and the Messiah that came from Isaac's descendants.

Earlier, I passed out some strips of paper with titles and Scripture passages on them. As I review the idea from Genesis, each of you read the passage on the strip, and then we will draw connections between the sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of Jesus. *The titles and references from the Scripture Strips are in parentheses below.*

Matthew 1:19–23

God had promised Abraham that his son, whom God had given the name *Isaac*, would be the son of promise through whom the promise of a land and a people would be fulfilled (Son of promise—Matthew 1:19–23). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

- ? **How did the angel’s announcement to Joseph reflect Abraham’s experience?** *Joseph was given the name Jesus for his promised son, and Jesus would bless his people by removing their sins. Similarly, Abraham had received the announcement of Isaac’s birth and name from God as well as the promises that Isaac would fulfill.*

John 3:16–18

We saw three times in Genesis 22 that God affirmed Isaac was Abraham’s only son (Only begotten Son—John 3:16–18). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

Both passages, and also the Hebrews 11 passage we read earlier, recognize a unique son given through a promise. Isaac and Jesus were both only sons promised by God. *Ishmael had been removed from the family and was not the son God had promised to Abraham.*

John 19:17–18

As Abraham and Isaac prepared for the sacrifice, Isaac carried the wood up the hill to where the altar would be built (Carried the wood of his sacrifice—John 19:17–18). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

- ? **What parallel do we see with the offering of Jesus on the cross?** *Jesus also had to carry the wooden cross (likely just the crossbeam) to the hill where he was crucified.*

Ephesians 5:1–2

Isaac, the son of promise, was to be offered as a sacrifice before the Lord, and the text does not mention Isaac struggling or refusing to obey God (Offered as a sacrifice—Ephesians 5:1–2). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

Christ’s willing sacrifice is also an offering before the Lord, the sweet-smelling aroma rising up to God just as the smoke of burnt offerings had done before.

Isaiah 53:10

Abraham, the father of Isaac, was to offer his own son as a burnt offering before the Lord (The Father offered the sacrifice—Isaiah 53:10). *Ask the person with this verse to read it.*

We see from this passage that it pleased God the Father to bruise the Son as Jesus bore the penalty for our sins in his body on the cross.

John 1:29–34

As Abraham demonstrated his faith through his obedience, God stopped the sacrifice of Isaac and provided a substitute—a ram—to be offered instead of Isaac (A lamb sacrifice—John 1:29–34). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

- ? **How did John the Baptist describe Jesus?** *As the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus was offered in our place just as the ram replaced Isaac. God provided the sacrifice in both cases.*

1 Corinthians 15:3–4

Isaac was as close to death as he could have come. The Hebrews 11 passage also explains that Isaac was dead “in a figurative sense” (A return from death—1 Corinthians 15:3–4). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

Jesus was literally dead in the tomb after he had been offered as a sacrifice, but he did not stay there. On the third day, he rose to life, showing his victory over death.

2 Chronicles 3:1


God had instructed Abraham to travel from Beersheba to the land of Moriah about 40 miles away. God brought Abraham to a specific mountain where the altar was built (Mount Moriah—2 Chronicles 3:1). *Ask the person with this verse to read it.*

- ? **What connection is there to the death of Jesus?** *Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem near the temple. Solomon’s temple had been built on Mount Moriah in the city that had formerly been called Salem in the land of Moriah. Remember that Melchizedek was the king of Salem.*

It is very likely that the place where Isaac was offered is very close to where Christ was crucified.

The amazing parallels that we have just seen are another reminder of the awesome sovereignty of God over history. We have the privilege of holding all of this revelation from God in our hands and studying it to understand his wonderful plan and promises for us. This is a privilege we should be sure to thank him for.

I hope you are impressed by the way we have seen God’s providence in the last several lessons. We have done a very brief study of Abraham, but I trust you can see God’s character shining through these accounts.

 Slides #22–25

- ? **What can you take from today’s lesson to help you be assured of God’s faithfulness to his promises?** *Discuss various answers.*
- ? **What benefit do you see in tracing the promise of a Savior, as we did in the cross-referencing activity, throughout the entire Bible?** *It should confirm our trust in God’s sovereign control over all history. Under the*

rule of Christ, we can expect him to be faithful to the future promises of the consummation of this corrupted creation.

- ?** Some of you may have been asking yourselves whether you could have been as faithful as Abraham in his situation. If you ever doubt your ability, how can you find assurance that your faith will carry you through? *It is by fixing our minds on God's promises, not our own abilities, that we can demonstrate our faith. Abraham constantly looked to God's promises, not his own ability or courage.*
- ?** How might you use the parallels between the sacrifice of Isaac and the crucifixion of Christ to share the gospel with someone you know? *This would be an intriguing way to show how God has worked in history. Many people are probably familiar with the account of Isaac, so it would be a great way to start a conversation that is intent upon presenting the amazing hope we have in Christ.*



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his faithfulness to provide a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.
- Ask God to help the students know him so well through studying his Word that they would be able to exercise complete obedience through faith.
- Thank God for the amazing things revealed to us in his Word.



A Bride for Isaac

*God led Abraham's servant to Rebekah,
who became Isaac's wife.*

Lesson Focus

When Abraham sent his servant to obtain a wife for Isaac, God demonstrated his control, even in humanly difficult situations. God kept his promise, providing Rebekah according to his perfect plan.

Key Passages

Genesis 24:1–14, 24:50–67

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize God's perfect plan in the events leading to the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.
- Describe God's sovereignty in the affairs of man.

Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

Lesson Preparation



Come On In

Write on the board, “How did God use a pitcher of water to provide a wife for Isaac?”



Activity: Examining Relationships

Students will use various passages of Scripture to identify the details of the timing of Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah and the birth of their sons, as well as the details of the relationships between the various people in the account.

Print one Examining Relationships worksheet for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

Optional Supplements

PowerPoint

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 39*.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

With a solemn oath, a quest to a distant land, an unexpected stranger, and the search for a bride, Genesis 24 is the remarkable account of God's sovereign provision of a wife for Isaac. Through Isaac and Rebekah, God would keep his promises to Abraham—to increase his descendants to as many as the sand and the stars; to give them a rich inheritance in the land of Canaan, taking possession of the cities of their enemies; and to bless all nations on earth (Genesis 12:2–3, 22:16–18).

It is important to mention two events that are described in Genesis 22, two chapters before the account of this lesson. The first event is God's dramatic test of Abraham's faith. Abraham demonstrated trust in the sovereignty of God (Hebrews 11:17) by not withholding his son, the son of promise—Isaac. God then reiterated his promise to bless all nations through Abraham's descendant. The second event, although a seemingly obscure fact, is the birth of Abraham's grandniece, Rebekah (Genesis 22:20–23). God was setting the stage for the fulfillment of his promises.

Abraham—By the opening of Genesis 24, Abraham's beloved wife Sarah had died (Genesis 23). Abraham was experiencing the blessings of wealth promised by God (Genesis 12:2). However, though God had promised that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:5), as of yet, Isaac (his son) had given him no grandchildren. In chapter 24, Abraham called his oldest servant to return to Abraham's relatives and bring back a wife

Historical/Apologetics Background

It was important to Abraham that Isaac's wife be a relative from his homeland, Haran (Genesis 24:4). The history and descendants of Isaac's grandfather, Terah, are given in Genesis 11:27–32, allowing us to confidently determine the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah. Terah was the father of three sons: Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. Of Terah's three sons, Abraham moved to Canaan, Nahor remained in northwest Mesopotamia, and Haran died in Ur (Genesis 11:28).

for Isaac. It is interesting that Abraham did not go himself, nor did he allow Isaac to leave Canaan. Isaac's future was to be in Canaan and nowhere else, for God had promised this land to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:1–9, 13:14–18, 15:1–21).

The Servant—The servant proved obedient and loyal in every way, faithfully yielding to his master and the son. He modeled a walk of faith by praying for specific guidance while actively preparing, traveling, testing, and waiting for God's answer (Genesis 24:12–13). And when he received God's remarkable answer, the servant responded with worship and eagerness to return the bride to his master's son (Genesis 24:52–54).

Rebekah—Through the providence of God, Rebekah was gracious and eager to submit to his plans for her life in fulfilling his eternal purposes.

Isaac—Just as Isaac once trusted his father's will even though it meant stretching out on an altar for sacrifice, he now trusted his father to secure a bride for him.

The history of Isaac and Rebekah is a small reflection of the Creator God's great story of redemption. From before the time sin first entered the world, God has had a plan to call out a people for himself. He poured out the awful penalty of sin upon his holy Son and then raised him up. He sent his Spirit into the world to prepare a bride, the church, for his Son. Those who have abandoned all, and have put their trust in God, share fully in the inheritance promised through the Son (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 19:29, 25:34; Ephesians 1:3–12; Colossians 1:22; Revelation 19:7).

Abraham's brother, Nahor, became the father of eight sons. One of those sons, Bethuel, became the father of Rebekah (Genesis 22:21–23). Thus, God records for us that Rebekah and Isaac were first cousins once removed.

In considering marital unions in the Old Testament between family members like that of Rebekah and Isaac, keep in mind what Genesis 5:4 teaches. Adam and Eve had sons and daughters, and close relatives married. This was the way the world

was populated at the beginning and repopulated after the flood with Noah's family. The law against close relatives marrying didn't come until the time of Moses (Leviticus 18–20). Before then, there were few genetic defects (mutations) that today make it inadvisable for close relatives to marry. God's Word has the answers—we need to begin with his truth.

Often people are quick to discount the Old Testament as untrue, unrelated, or unreliable. However, God has provided this information—all of it—so we can see that it is precisely recorded and intended to weave a tapestry of redemption from beginning to end.

God often reveals things in the world today that confirm his history. This account we are studying is a good example.

Because of what we know today about Mesopotamian culture, we can understand Abraham's reluctance for his son to return there. And we can see why God had to call Abraham

away. Archaeological discoveries in the area reveal that the people worshipped the moon god, Sin (also called Nanna). There are rather horrifying accounts of royal burial pits that include not only a royal personage but numerous servants and musicians who evidently committed mass suicide. It becomes clear that God intended Abraham, the one through whom he planned to bless all the families of the earth, to journey to a new location—one which was in a far more strategic spot for disseminating this global blessing.

The fact that the ancient city of Haran still exists today is further confirmation of the Bible's history. The Bible tells us that this is where Abraham's father, Terah, took Abraham, Sarah, and Lot (Genesis 11:31). In this same area, Turkish villages still bear the name of Abraham's grandfather and great-grandfather, Nahor and Serug (Genesis 11:22). God's Word is true and provides us with answers to questions we may encounter.



Studying God's Word

Introduction

Let's take a few minutes to recap what we have learned up to this point. Since this is a chronological walk through the Bible, we want to make sure that we are following the flow of history. *Use the History of Genesis Timeline to help the students remember the flow of events as you discuss them.*

Two thousand years before the time of Abraham, God created the world and placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (**Creation**). They rebelled against God, bringing sin (**Corruption**) into the world. The increasing sin of man was judged by God in the **Catastrophe** of the flood about 1,600 years later. Shortly after the flood, the people rebelled against God again, and God confused their languages (**Confusion**) as a punishment.

So, remember that as we talk about Abraham, we are looking at a period of time which was about 2,000 years after creation.

- ? Abraham was given a great promise from God, and that promise was to come through whom? *Isaac.*

God had called Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, and Abraham had obeyed God's command. At the last moment, God stepped in to stop Abraham and provided a ram to offer in Isaac's place. If you recall, we talked about how this was a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice—Jesus—that the Father would offer on the cross.

A wonderful thread weaves throughout the Bible of God's plan to redeem a people for himself. Knowing that God is faithful, we can trust him to fulfill his promises. Today, we are going to see more of those fulfilled promises.

- ? What part of the promise given to Abraham is Isaac a key part of? *God promised Abraham that he would have many descendants. Isaac was the son that would continue Abraham's line—a line that would ultimately produce the Messiah.*

The Servant's Journey

As we look at the beginning of the family of Isaac and Rebekah, we are going to see how God is sovereign over every detail and is bringing his perfect plans to pass.

To give us a little more context for this lesson, we are going to start with a short activity. I want you to take a minute to find the answers to the first three questions listed in your Student Guides. And then we will review them in a few minutes. *Allow students some time to look up the verses and answer the questions.*

📄 Slides #1-3

- Write on the board, "How did God use a pitcher of water to provide a wife for Isaac?"

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

- ? Abraham and Sarah were very old when they had Isaac, but how old was Isaac at the time of his mother's death? *37. She was 127 at her death (Genesis 23:1), and Isaac had been born when she was 90.*
- ? According to our passage, how old will Isaac be when he marries Rebekah? *40.*
- ? Looking into the future a bit—a preview of next week's lesson—how long will it be before Isaac and Rebekah have children? *Twenty more years, since Isaac is sixty at the birth of the twin sons, Esau and Jacob.*

How amazing to think that we have such detailed information about these events that happened thousands of years ago. Knowing that God has seen fit to provide us with a true history of his redemptive work should be another great encouragement to us.

Genesis 24:1–14

 Slides #4–9

Let's read Genesis 24:1–14 together and see how the events unfold. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us. This process is an important part of understanding God's Word.

- ? What type of literature is this passage? *Historical narrative.*
- ? Who are the characters in this account? *Abraham and his servant. This is likely Eliezer from Genesis 15:2.*
- ? How was Abraham described in verse 1? *Old and blessed by God.*
- ? What did Abraham ask Eliezer to promise him? *Abraham asked him to not take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites but to go to his home country and take a wife from Abraham's family.*
- ? Who was Eliezer to swear by? *The Lord, the God of heaven and God of earth.*
- ? What was the sign of the oath? *Abraham asked Eliezer to place his hand under his thigh to confirm the oath. This would be equivalent to shaking hands or swearing on a Bible.*
- ? What was Eliezer's objection in verse 5? *He thought the woman he found might not come to Canaan, and he wanted to take Isaac along.*
- ? How did Abraham respond to the request? *Abraham forbade Isaac from going with Eliezer.*
- ? What did Abraham remind Eliezer of? *Abraham reminded him of God's promise to give Abraham's offspring the land.*
- ? How did Abraham reassure Eliezer? *Abraham told him that God would send his angel before him to ensure his success.*
- ? What would happen if no woman accepted the proposal? *Eliezer would be released from the oath.*

- ❓ **How did Eliezer respond?** *He swore the oath, took ten camels and gifts from his master, and headed to the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia.*
- ❓ **How did Eliezer acknowledge his dependence on God?** *He prayed that God would give him success and show kindness to Abraham, and that the woman he asked to give him a drink and who would reply by offering both him and his camels a drink, would be the woman to marry Isaac.*
- ❓ **Toward the end of verse 14, what word did Eliezer use to describe God’s choosing of a wife for Isaac?** *“Appointed.”*

Discover the Truth

Abraham desired to have his son marry a woman of his own family, a common custom, and not a woman of the pagan Canaanites around him. So he sent his servant, Eliezer, to Haran to take a wife for him. Abraham showed his clear trust in God’s providence by assuring Eliezer that the angel of God would go before him.

As Eliezer left, he took 10 camels and other men (verse 32 tells us of them) and gifts for the family of the woman he would take as a wife for Isaac. The trek was about 500 miles north from Canaan to Nahor’s city, Haran. This is where Abraham had left (Genesis 11:31) to go on to Canaan with Lot and others. His brother Nahor had stayed in Haran and established a family. In fact, you can still find this city in Turkey today.

Eliezer showed his trust in God’s providence by offering a very specific prayer to God and asking God to show him whom he had appointed as a wife for Isaac. Eliezer trusted that God would bless Abraham.

The Servant’s Prayer Is Answered

For the sake of time, I am going to summarize what happened next, and then we will pick up the reading. As Eliezer was offering his prayer, a young woman came to the well and gave him a drink when he asked, and then she offered to water his camels as well. Eliezer was not certain that his mission had been accomplished, but he gave Rebekah jewelry, and she invited him to lodge at her father’s house—the house of Nahor!

Eliezer responded (in verses 26–28) by bowing down and worshipping God as he recognized that God had led him to a young woman from Abraham’s family. Eliezer knew that God had sovereignly directed his steps to meet this young woman at the well.

Rebekah’s brother Laban came and invited Eliezer and the others to his home. When they offered food to Eliezer, he rejected the meal until he had had the opportunity to tell them of the message from his master Abraham. Then he recounted the events to them. We will start reading with their response to Abraham’s request. *If time allows, you could begin reading at verse 42 or earlier.*

Genesis 24:50–61

🖥️ Slides #10–13

Let's read Genesis 24:50–61 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ❓ **How did Laban and Bethuel respond to Abraham's request for a wife for Isaac?** *They both recognized that the Lord had appointed this situation and that they were in no place to reject what God had appointed. They offered Rebekah to become Isaac's wife.*
- ❓ **How did Eliezer respond to their acceptance?** *He again fell to the ground in worship to God. He also offered them the gifts he had brought from Abraham, as would have been customary at the time as a sort of dowry.*
- ❓ **How did the house of Bethuel treat the men from Abraham?** *They offered them great hospitality, giving them food and lodging as well as care for their animals.*
- ❓ **When Eliezer requested to leave the very next morning, how did the family respond?** *Initially they asked him to give them at least 10 more days, but then they relented and asked Rebekah her preference.*
- ❓ **When Rebekah was asked to leave immediately, how did she respond?** *She was willing to go.*
- ❓ **How did Rebekah's family send her off?** *They offered her a blessing—that she would have many descendants and that they would be powerful.*

Discover the Truth

So Eliezer took Rebekah and the accompanying servants, and they headed back to Canaan less than 24 hours after Eliezer had arrived. God's sovereign hand can be clearly seen in all of the events and acknowledged by all involved—no one doubted his guidance in these affairs. Finding Rebekah was the fulfillment of the prayer of Eliezer. She offered lodging, the family took in the men, the family recognized God's hand in the events, and Rebekah submitted and was willing to obey God's obvious plan for her marriage to Isaac.

We can't read a passage like this without recognizing that God is sovereign over the affairs of men—even to the details of the marriage of a certain man to a certain woman. We can trust that the same God who was guiding these affairs is intimately involved in the lives of every believer today, as well.

Examining Relationships Activity

Pass out the Examining Relationships worksheets.

As we saw earlier, God reveals very specific details to us in the text about the timing of the events. Now we are going to look at the details of the relationships between the people mentioned in this account.

Use the passages on the worksheet to identify the relationships and fill in the pedigree. We will go over the relationships in just a minute. *Allow the students to work on the answers, discussing them as they finish. Use the answer key if necessary.*

Connect to the Truth

As you looked at these relationships, it may have made you a bit uncomfortable. However, we need to make sure that we remember that marrying close relatives was the only option for our earliest ancestors, and it was not forbidden by God for another 400 years after Abraham when he delivered the law to Moses.

- ? How were Abraham and Sarah related? *They shared the same father but had different mothers, so she was his half-sister. Abraham had used this fact to deceive Pharaoh and Abimelech in earlier accounts.*
- ? Looking at the pedigree diagram, which is incomplete, who is the father of Bethuel? *Nahor.*
- ? We don't know the name of Bethuel's wife, but what was his daughter's name? *Rebekah, who is the sister of Laban.*

🖥️ Slide #14

Looking at the left side of the diagram, we see that the wife of Abraham was Sarah and that their only son was Isaac. Abraham had Ishmael by Hagar, and in Genesis 25 you can read about his other children with Keturah.

Interestingly, this pedigree helps us see that Lot and Isaac were first cousins and that, technically speaking, Rebekah was Isaac's first cousin once removed.

The Bride Meets the Groom

Our last passage today will describe the arrival of the travelers to Canaan.

Genesis 24:62–67

Let's read Genesis 24:62–67 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? What was Isaac doing as Eliezer and the others approached his home? *He was meditating in the field.*
- ? How did Rebekah approach Isaac? *She dismounted the camel she was riding and covered her face with a veil. It was customary for a waiting bride to veil her face until the day of the marriage.*

🖥️ Slides #15–16

- ? What was Isaac’s response to Rebekah’s arrival? *He took her into his mother’s tent and then took her as his wife.*

Discover the Truth

Just as Rebekah had submitted to God’s clear plan for her marriage to Isaac, Isaac received her as his wife. God’s perfect plan had been accomplished as the people involved in the events recognized God’s will and submitted to it.

After Isaac and Rebekah’s marriage, it would be twenty years before their sons, Jacob and Esau, were born. Fifteen years after that, Abraham would die and be buried with Sarah (Genesis 25:7–11). Abraham also had other sons with his concubine Keturah, but he had sent them away with gifts to ensure that it was clear that Isaac was to inherit the land (Genesis 25:1–6), just as God had promised.

After our review next week, we will pick up this amazing history with Jacob and Esau and the continuing hand of God in the affairs of his people.

Application

I trust that you can recognize this section of Scripture as a clear example of how God uses people to accomplish his plans. Abraham knew that God would be faithful to his promise to multiply his descendants through Isaac, and he sent Eliezer to find a wife for his son. Arriving at the city of Abraham’s brother Nahor, the servant prayed to God and acknowledged his dependence in finding the woman he already trusted God had appointed.

In kindness toward Abraham, God brought along Rebekah. She completely fulfilled the requests of Eliezer’s prayer and just “happened” to be one of Abraham’s relatives. But there is no accident in these events; rather, it is an example of God’s providence and faithfulness to fulfill his promise. God demonstrated his control over all of these affairs—his sovereign hand guiding all of these things. God provided a wife for Isaac, and through this marriage the nation of Israel would come. Their son Jacob would be the father of the twelve tribes that were the foundation of the people who would eventually inhabit the land promised to Abraham.

Consider reading Romans 11:33–36 for the class. In all of this, we are given the privilege of seeing how God unfolded his plan. His faithfulness is evident in all of these events, offering us a reason to put our faith in him and his good ways.

- ? Why did Abraham refuse to have Isaac marry a woman from the Canaanites, and what parallel can we draw to God’s plan for marriage as described in the New Testament? *Abraham did not want Isaac’s wife to come from among the pagans of Canaan, but from his own family. It is clear*

☐ Slide #17

☐ Slides #18–19

that Abraham's family knew God as they recognized that these events were from the Lord (Genesis 24:50–51). Rather than marrying a woman from the pagan nations in Canaan, Abraham desired a godly wife for his son. Likewise, God calls Christians to marry only those who are believers as well (2 Corinthians 6:14).

- ?** What must be true about God in order for him to orchestrate all of the events surrounding the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah? Discuss the attributes of God, including his omniscience, omnipotence, sovereignty, wisdom, and grace. He is able to direct the affairs of men in a way that is beyond our comprehension.
- ?** If time allows, read Romans 8:28–39 aloud for the class. **What comfort can you draw from understanding that the same God who appointed Rebekah to be Isaac's wife is still in charge of the world we live in today?** Romans 8, especially verses 28–39, points us to the truth that it is God who will work all of the events in our lives for good. It is his sovereign control that we can rest in, knowing that all of the providences of God—bitter and sweet—are from his hands and will accomplish his purposes. We are called to walk in obedience to his commands, demonstrating our love for him, and cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit to grow in holiness.
- ?** What is the significance of Eliezer's worship at the granting of his prayers? Do you respond the same way? His reaction was to bow to the ground and praise God for working in such a remarkable way. Many of us fail to recognize God's providence in similar situations, and we don't offer him the worship he is due for so many things that we take for granted. We would do well to take time each day to recognize God's providence in our lives and praise him. We would also do well to thank him for the trials that he brings to us to help us grow to be more like Christ.
- ?** What benefit is there in uncovering the details of the timing and of the relationships surrounding this passage of Scripture? The details give us a clear picture of what was happening at the time. We are not left with vague ideas of what might have taken place, but a detailed, historical account that we can trust, including customs of the day and historical places consistent with what we know from other sources. We must remember, though, that these outside sources merely confirm what we already trust to be true from Scripture.

 Slides #20–24

 Slides #25–26



Group Prayer Time

Be sure to pray with your class and take requests if time allows.

- Praise God for his unchanging character.
- Ask God to remind us throughout the week of who he is, what he says, and what he has done.
- Thank God for his promises and for his perfect plans to fulfill them.
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Unit Review

A review of Lessons 31–39.

Every tenth lesson in the curriculum is designed to be a review lesson. The younger grades will be doing various activities and reviewing the teaching. You may choose to do some sort of review activity; have a time of discussion, reflecting on what has been taught in the unit; or use the following video resource to extend or reinforce the concepts that have been taught.

Apologetics Focus: “One Blood, One Race” (27 min.)

Many Christians do not have a biblical view of the different people groups that exist on the planet. If we are all descendants of Adam and Eve, then we are all part of the same race—the human race. While there are different ethnic or people groups, there is only one race. The idea of races has evolutionary roots, and we need to be aware of how an evolutionary worldview may have corrupted our thinking. In addition, common objections about where Cain got his wife and close marriages (like Abraham and Sarah) can be answered as we learn and trust what the Bible says.

After showing the video, use these questions to engage the class in discussion.

1. How would you answer the question, “Where did Cain get his wife?”

The Bible tells us that Adam and Eve had “sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:4). Therefore, since they were the first two people, sisters had to marry brothers originally. So, Cain’s wife was his sister (or possibly a niece).

Why was it not a problem for close relatives to marry originally, but it is now?

Brothers marrying sisters would not have been a problem in the beginning because harmful mutations, which resulted from the fall and God's curse, would not have had time to accumulate. By the time of Moses, however, God commanded that close relatives must not marry. But in the beginning, it was fine and necessary.

2. Is natural selection the same thing as evolution? Explain.

No. Natural selection is actually the opposite of evolution. Organisms best suited to their environment survive, while the others die out. This results in a loss of information in a population, and works only on characteristics (and genes) that already exist. This process does not result in new information.

3. Why is it incorrect to say, "God created all the species that we have today"?

God created "kinds" of animals—horse kind, elephant kind, dog kind, cat kind, etc., instead of species of animals. These original animals had great genetic variety, which would express itself in future generations and allow the offspring to adapt to many different environments around the world. Speciation has occurred as populations have become isolated and have lost certain genes.

4. Can you explain how all the different people groups arose?

If Adam and Eve had a mixture of "light color" genes and "dark color" genes, then their descendants could have a wide range of skin color from very light to very dark, with most people somewhere between (as seen in the world today). Adam and Eve likely possessed genetic variation for eye shape and other distinguishing characteristics as well.

As people migrated from Babel, different groups became isolated from others and likely married only within their language group. Each group carried a set of physical characteristics as determined by their genes. As they intermarried, certain characteristics began to dominate due to the group's small pool of genes. Over time, different people groups displayed distinct physical characteristics. For example, Asians typically have almond-shaped eyes, dark hair, and middle-brown skin, whereas Europeans have round eyes and fair-colored hair and skin.

If you believed that people evolved from ape-like creatures, how might you tend to view people who are different from you (skin tone/shade, hair texture, shape of the nose and eyes, etc.)?

An evolutionary view can lead people to view others as being closer to apes or lower in the evolutionary tree. This can promote racist attitudes. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, biological arguments were used to justify horrible atrocities which were committed in the name of science. Even today, that attitude persists in some circles. However, this is contrary to the biblical teaching that all people are made in the image of God and that their value is based on their personhood, not their physical features.

5. What do Acts 17:26–29 and Galatians 3:26–29 teach us about who needs to hear the gospel?

Since all people are descendants of Adam, all have sinned in Adam, and all individually have sinned. Each person, regardless of ethnicity or people group, needs forgiveness in Christ. We should preach the gospel to everyone without distinction, trusting that individuals from every tribe, language, people, and nation can be part of God's family.