

Lessons 31–40

Promises from God

Unit

4



Adult

Student Guide



Answers
BIBLE CURRICULUM

Answers Bible Curriculum

Unit 4 • Adult Student

Copyright © 2017 Answers in Genesis, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, unless expressly permitted by the terms of the Limited License.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For more information write:

Answers in Genesis

PO Box 510

Hebron, KY 41048

Printed in China.

Contents

Introduction to Answers Bible Curriculum	5
31 One Race: the Human Race	7
Studying God's Word	10
Mapping the Nations	10
God's Word in the Real World	11
Prayer Requests	12
32 Job's Suffering	13
Studying God's Word	16
Understanding Trials	18
God's Word in the Real World	19
Prayer Requests	20
33 God Calls Abram	21
Studying God's Word	24
A Heavenly Hope	24
God's Word in the Real World	25
Prayer Requests	26
34 Abram and Lot	27
Studying God's Word	30
Abram's Example	30
God's Word in the Real World	31
Prayer Requests	32
35 Sodom and Gomorrah	33
Studying God's Word	36
Respectable Sins	37
God's Word in the Real World	38
Prayer Requests	39

36 God's Covenant with Abram	41
Studying God's Word	44
Abram's Error	44
God's Word in the Real World	45
Prayer Requests	46
37 Isaac: Child of Promise	47
Studying God's Word	50
Abraham's Seed	50
God's Word in the Real World	51
Prayer Requests	52
38 Abraham's Test	53
Studying God's Word	56
From the Seed to the Lamb	57
God's Word in the Real World	58
Prayer Requests	58
39 A Bride for Isaac	59
Studying God's Word	62
Examining Relationships	63
God's Word in the Real World	63
Prayer Requests	64



Introduction to Answers Bible Curriculum

In this unit, we meet Abram (later renamed Abraham). He is considered the father of all those who have faith. God called Abram to leave his home and his family and to go to the land that God would show him. Abram obeyed and moved to the land of Canaan. Then God gave Abram a wonderful promise, what we call the *Abrahamic Covenant*. God promised to bless Abram, to make of him a mighty nation, to give him all the land of Canaan, and that from his offspring would come one who would bless all the nations on earth.

We live 4,000 years after Abraham's time. Though Abraham didn't see these promises fulfilled in his lifetime, we have seen them come to pass. God is faithful and powerful to accomplish all that he promises. That can give us strong encouragement and hope as we wait for the fulfillment of all that he has promised to us.

We encourage you to read the Prepare to Learn section before class each week. This will provide important background information so that you will get more from each lesson.



One Race: the Human Race

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

What You Will Learn

- That all people are descendants of Adam and are of one blood.
- How the different people groups came to be.
- 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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 (Genesis 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

Who in this room is your relative?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

The Peoples Divided

Genesis 10:1–5

Spreading Around the World

Genesis 10:6–20

Divided into Nations

Genesis 10:21–32

Mapping the Nations Activity

Fill out the Mapping the Nations worksheet in small groups.

Take notes as you study the following passages.

We Are All One Blood

Acts 17:24–28

Genesis 3:20

Application

1. In 1 Samuel 16:7, how did God say that he sees people differently from how man sees people?
2. How does the idea of judging based on appearances relate to our topic today?
3. Why is this type of prejudice unbiblical?
4. Does God see any group of people differently with respect to their sin?
5. How does this fact influence the way you think about sharing the hope of Christ with others?

6. In Revelation 5:9, where have the people worshipping Christ been redeemed from?

7. What attitudes concerning people who are different from you do you need to repent of?

8. 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?



Prayer Requests

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Job's Suffering

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

What You Will Learn

- That God is sovereign over every circumstance.
- The source of Job's faith and trust in God.

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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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).

Job’s friends approached to comfort him, but they only served to comfort 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).

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 prosperity. 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 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 manifestation 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

Do good things happen to good people? Explain.

Take notes as you study the following passages.

The Trials of Job

Job 1:1-5

Job 1:6-12

Job 1:13–22

Job 2:1–6

Job 2:7–10

God Questions Job

Job 38:1–7

Job 40:3–5

Job 42:1–6

James 5:11

Understanding Trials Activity

For each of the questions below, write a sentence or two that explains your thinking on the topic in light of the ideas we explored in Job.

1. Have you heard it said before that “good things happen to good people”? How does this statement compare to what you have just read about Job’s trials?
2. It is certainly true that sin has consequences, but is it biblically accurate to say that every trial you face is the result of sin in your life? Why or why not?
3. Identify a time in your life when your sin caused you to suffer consequences. Read Hebrews 12:5–11. How does this passage help you understand God’s role and purpose in that situation?
4. Considering the following attributes of God, describe how each of these can lead you to look to God in times of suffering:

Wise –

Loving –

Omniscient –

Sovereign –
5. In the middle of Job’s lament he says:

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!
Job 19:25–27

How can trials in your life point you to the hope that you have in Christ and a future in heaven?

Application

6. 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?
7. 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?
8. What comfort can we draw from the behind-the-scenes look at the authority God exercises over Satan's actions?
9. 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 others who believe in ideas like karma, fate, chance, or the general principle that what goes around comes around?

10. What idea have you drawn from our lesson today that you can put into practice as you face various trials throughout the next week?



Prayer Requests



God Calls Abram

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. We learn in Hebrews that 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

What You Will Learn

- How Abram demonstrated his faith in God.
- The difference 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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).

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).

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 Woolley 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 harkening 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

How does God reward faith and obedience?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Abram Obeys

Genesis 11:27–12:9

Abraham's Faith

Hebrews 11:8–16

Matthew 6:19–21

A Heavenly Hope Activity

Working in small groups, answer the questions below.

1. From Hebrews 11:1, write a biblical definition for faith.

2. Below is a list of events in Abraham's life that demonstrate his faith through his obedience to God. Some of these will be discussed in later lessons, and some we have discussed today. Below each item, try to identify a similar situation in your life

in which you have demonstrated, or may someday demonstrate, your faith.

Leaving his home and family for an unknown country

Building an altar to worship God

Offering Lot the choice of land to live in

Waiting for a son to fulfill God's promise

Offering Isaac, the son of promise, as a sacrifice

3. How does Abraham embody the instructions in Colossians 3:1–5?
4. What things here on earth have you set your hope on?
5. What would need to change about your lifestyle if you were to act as a “stranger and pilgrim” here on this earth?
6. If we are going to trust God to fulfill his promises, why is an understanding of God's faithfulness important?

Application

7. We know that God has promised to reward those who place their faith in him. When can we expect to receive those rewards?
8. 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?
9. Why is it so important to understand God’s attribute of faithfulness as we seek to follow him in faith?
10. 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?
11. In what ways are you failing to set your mind on things above? How can you seek to change this attitude?
12. As you seek to live your life with a focus on heavenly things, how will you be viewed by unbelievers? How can this be a launching pad from which you can share the gospel?



Prayer Requests

.....

.....

.....



Abram and Lot

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

What You Will Learn

- Why Lot chose to settle near Sodom.
- How Abram's godly choices compare 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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 southern 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 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

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

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

What distinguished Lot’s desires from Abram’s desires?

Take notes as you study the following passage.

Abram and Lot Separate

Genesis 13:1–18

Abram’s Example Activity

Work in groups to answer the questions below.

As we read the Old Testament, we don’t want to lose sight of Jesus. Read the following New Testament passages and then answer the questions with respect to Genesis 13.

Mark 10:41–45; Luke 22:24–30

How do these passages relate to Abram’s interaction with Lot regarding the conflict that arose between their households?

If we aligned these scenes, who would represent Lot in the New Testament passages?

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?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Rescuing Lot

Genesis 14:12–24

2 Samuel 18:18

Hebrews 7:1–4

Application

1. What interesting historical or geographical nugget did you learn today as we considered this text?

2. Why is it so hard for us to count other more significant than ourselves, as Abram did for Lot, especially in the midst of a conflict?

3. 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?

4. What did you learn about Jesus from this Old Testament text?

5. Have you ever faced a choice like Lot's choice of where to settle? How did you make that decision?

6. What choices are you facing in your life right now that you need counsel or prayer for?



Prayer Requests



Sodom and Gomorrah

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

What You Will Learn

- That God's justice demands a punishment for sin.
- The sins that God hates.
- How God shows 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.”

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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).

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.

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 archaeological 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, Zeboiim, 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.

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.

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

How can God be both just and merciful?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Abraham Pleads for Sodom

Genesis 18:1–33

The Angels Save Lot

Genesis 19:1–29

Respectable Sins Activity

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and consider your own personal understanding of the nature of sin.

1. Look at the list of sins in verses 9–11. Which sin in each pair below would you consider worse? (Circle one.)
 - Adultery or theft
 - Homosexuality or drunkenness
 - Reviling (insulting someone) or coveting
2. Does this passage say that any of the sins is better or worse than the others?
3. Have you ever committed any of these sins? (Consider that looking with lust is the same as adultery [Matthew 5:28], and theft is theft, regardless of the value of the object.)
4. What is the punishment for committing even one of the sins? See verse 10.
5. Is there such a thing as an acceptable or respectable sin?

6. How does verse 11 give you hope in Christ?

Application

7. 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?

8. How does God's promise of the Seed of Abraham, Jesus, demonstrate his mercy?

9. 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?

10. 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?

11. Using the analogy of a criminal standing before a judge, how can we help others understand that God is both merciful and just?



Prayer Requests



God's Covenant with Abram

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

What You Will Learn

- The nature of the covenant between God and Abraham.
- How the descendants of Abraham connect to the hope of the gospel.

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.”

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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).

But Abram was childless. How would this promise ever come to pass? His question was finally voiced in Genesis 15:2: “O Lord God,

what will you give me, for I continue childless?” God's response? “Look toward heaven, and number the stars . . . So shall your offspring be” (Genesis 15:5).

God was faithful to his promises as he continued to shape Abram's life for his purposes. Chapter 17 reveals God again confirming this covenant made between God and Abram and his descendants (Genesis 17:7). The sign of the covenant was to be circumcision (Genesis 17:10). And it is here that God changes his name from Abram, meaning “exalted father,” to Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude” (Genesis 17:5). Even in this name change we see God reassuring Abraham of his faithfulness.

Throughout this amazing saga, and in spite of apparently impossible circumstances, we know that Abraham “believed the LORD, and he accounted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). In fact, we see these words repeated throughout the New Testament (Romans 4:3, 4:22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23) as a reminder that it is not our works of obedience but faith in God—the belief in what he says—that leads to righteousness.

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

What happens when you take matters into your own hands?

.....

Take notes as you study the following passages.

God Promises Abram a Son and Many Descendants

Genesis 15:1–21

.....

.....

.....

Abram's Impatience

Genesis 16:1–16

.....

.....

.....

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 following questions to see if you can understand this idea better.

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.)

2. What part of God's created order did Abram violate in trying to bring an heir into the world through Hagar?
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?
4. How would you explain how Abram went wrong in not waiting for God's timing?

Application

5. What truth from the Scriptures we looked at today has helped you see God's grace in the account of Abram?
6. 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)?
7. What does it mean to "wait on God" and his timing? Why is this so challenging at a practical level?

8. In what areas of your life do you find it hard to wait on God's timing?

9. How do we maintain hope in the midst of circumstances where God seems to have forgotten us?



Prayer Requests



Isaac: Child of Promise

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

What You Will Learn

- God's faithfulness in keeping his promise to Abraham.
- 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."

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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).

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).

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 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

Who is the offspring promised to Abram??

Take notes as you study the following passages.

God Confirms His Covenant

Genesis 17:1–27

Isaac Is Born

Genesis 21:1–21

Abraham’s Seed Activity

Working in small groups, answer the questions below.

1. Read the following passages and look for two common threads. Record them in the space below. Romans 4:1–5:2; Galatians 3:1–18
2. Looking at the Galatians passage above, what does Paul clarify about the offspring (or Seed) promised to Abraham? (This is a reference to Genesis 22:18.)

3. God promised Abraham that all of the nations of the world would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3). Jesus is the Seed of Abraham. How have the nations of the world been blessed in him?

4. Was Abraham a sinful man?

5. Was Abraham counted righteous because of his works?

6. Is any person ever counted as righteous because of their works?

7. What is the connection between faith and righteousness?

8. If Abraham was saved, his sins must have been covered. How was Jesus involved in Abraham's righteousness?

9. How is your hope of salvation in Christ different from Abraham's?

Application

10. How has your view of earning righteousness changed in light of the passages we have looked at today?

11. Many people believe 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?

12. 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?

13. 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?

14. Why is adding some type of work to the gospel so appealing to us?

15. 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?



Prayer Requests



Abraham's Test

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

What You Will Learn

- How Abraham demonstrated his faith and trust in God.
- How the sacrifice of Isaac and the ram compares to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
- 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.”

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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 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.

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 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

How does Isaac represent Jesus Christ?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Abraham’s Test

Genesis 22:1–19

Hebrews 11:17–19

From the Seed to the Lamb Activity

Complete the From the Seed to the Lamb worksheet.

Write the connections between Isaac and Christ represented by these Scripture passages:

Matthew 1:19–23

John 3:16–18

John 19:17–18

Ephesians 5:1–2

Isaiah 53:10

John 1:29–34

1 Corinthians 15:3–4

2 Chronicles 3:1

Application

1. What can you take from today's lesson to help you be assured of God's faithfulness to his promises?
2. What benefit do you see in tracing the promise of a Savior, as we did in the cross-referencing activity, throughout the entire Bible?
3. 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?
4. How might you use the parallels between the sacrifice of Isaac and the crucifixion of Christ to share the gospel with someone you know?



Prayer Requests



A Bride for Isaac

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

What You Will Learn

- God’s perfect plan in the events leading to the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.
- 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.”

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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 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).

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).

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

How did God use a pitcher of water to provide a wife for Isaac?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

The Servant's Journey

Genesis 24:1–14

The Servant's Prayer Is Answered

Genesis 24:50–61

Examining Relationships Activity

Complete the Examining Relationships worksheet.

Take notes as you study the following passage.

The Bride Meets the Groom

Genesis 24:62–67

Application

1. 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?
2. What must be true about God in order for him to orchestrate all of the events surrounding the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah?
3. 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?
4. What is the significance of Eliezer's worship at the granting of his prayers? Do you respond the same way?

5. What benefit is there in uncovering the details of the timing and relationships surrounding this passage of Scripture?



Prayer Requests
