

Divine Covenants...the basis for a plan of salvation...

1. Study Joshua 24:2. How did people worship God during Abram's youth? Were there any true disciples / priests of God then?

From the time of Noah's Ark to Abraham, man failed to recognize and worship God properly. Leading to the city of Babel, people spoke the same language and, as they attempted to make a name for themselves by building a large city with a tower to reach the heavens, God judged this sin of pride. As the result, people were scattered and given different languages about the earth (Gen 11:1-9). Generations later, Abram's family continued the practice of pagan worship. There were, however, some true priests of God that were present then. Melchizedek, king and priest of Salem, was one such example (Gen 14:18-20). But there wasn't any formal written record of an established form of worship for God. It was all passed down through oral communication and tradition.

2. Examine carefully Genesis 12: 1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; and 22:15-18. What are your observations of all of God's Promises?

a) *"I will make you a great nation."* Abraham is promised that his descendants will be numerous, and the nation formed would be Israel (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:1-2, 7; 22:17).

b) *"I will give to you and your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan."* Abraham's descendants are promised the land of Canaan, which sets up the establishment of a state (Gen 12:1,7; 13:14-15,17; 15:17-21; 17:8). According to the Bible, this land extends from Egypt to include Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, western parts of Iraq and northern parts of Saudi Arabia.

c) *"..., where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."* Abraham is foretold that his descendants will be in bondage for 400 years, and paradoxically, come out with many possessions (Gen 15:13-14).

d) *"I will bless you."* Abraham is promised that he will be personally blessed (Gen 12:2).

e) *"I will make your name great."* Abraham is promised that he will be renowned (Gen 12:2).

f) *"...you will be the father of a multitude of nations."* Abraham's descendants will originate many new nations (Gen 17:3-4, 6).

g) *"You shall be a blessing..."* Abraham is selected by God to be the person through which God would bless.

h) *"...I will bless those who bless you,..."* How others treat Abraham determines how God treats them (Gen 12:3)!

i) *"...the one who curses you I will curse."* (Gen 12:3)

j) *"And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* In Abraham all will ultimately be blessed (Gen 12:3; 22:18). Abraham was the first man in the Bible, quoted by God, to be called a prophet (Gen 20:6-7), one who received revelations and one who represented God to man. Ultimately, his descendant, Jesus Christ, would provide the means so that "all the families of the earth will be blessed." [Note: Enoch, who existed earlier than Abraham, was noted by Jude to have "prophesied." (Jude 1:14)]

k) *"I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her."* Sarah, Abraham's wife will bear a son (Gen 15:1-4; 17:16-21).

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l) "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham;.." Abram's name is changed, and his new name Abraham becomes a name of renown (Gen17:5).

m) "..., you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name." Sarai's name is changed to Sarah (Gen 17:15).

In essence, the Abrahamic Covenant makes promises a) to Abraham personally, b) to Abraham's descendants Israel, and c) to humanity (gentiles). This covenant forms the basis from which other covenants expand upon. The Land Covenant (also known as Palestinian or Deuteronomic) expands upon the promise of land to Israel. The Davidic Covenant expands upon the issue of kingship and inheritance through Israel. The New Covenant expands on the promise of blessing to humanity.

3. How many wives and sons did Abraham have? With whom among Abraham's descendants was the Abrahamic Covenant confirmed?

Hagar bore Ishmael (Gen 16:4-15)

Sarah bore Isaac (Gen 18:11-15)

Keturah bore Zimram, Joshkan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (Gen 25:1-2)

Confirmed through Isaac (Gen 26:2-5, 24)

Confirmed through Isaac's second son Jacob (Gen 28:13-15)

Confirmed through all 12 sons of Jacob (Gen 49)

The Abrahamic Covenant follows the line through which God's promises and blessings flow. While there were many descendants of Abraham, descendants outside the line of Isaac-Jacob were not entitled to or beneficiaries of the covenant. But also note that God blessed Hagar: a) "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count," b) "you shall bear a son," c) "you shall call him Ishmael," d) "he will be a wild donkey of a man," e) "his hand will be against everyone," f) "everyone's hand will be against him," g) "he will live to the east of all his brothers" (Gen 16:9-12).

4. What is the significance of Genesis 15:10 and Leviticus 1:14-17?

Abraham offers the birds according to the Law in Leviticus, which was written hundreds of years later; the Law of God was revealed to Abraham in greater detail than what was recorded in the Bible (Gen 26:5)!

5. What is the significance of Genesis 15:17?

When men made covenants with each other during the time of Abraham, they would arrange the sacrificed animals, and each would walk between the animal halves. This was symbolic of the agreement that each would uphold their part of the covenant. In this case, **only** God, symbolized by the smoking oven and a flaming torch, walked between the animal halves. The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant. This means that this covenant all depended upon God and did not require anything of Abraham. **Only God, by Himself, made and was bound by His own covenant!**

The Bible considers Abraham as one of the greatest examples of faith (Rom 4:1-3); *faith that obeys God*. Moreover, Abraham never saw the complete fulfillment of all of the covenant blessings in his lifetime; other aspects of it were fulfilled later! The unconditional Abrahamic Covenant is eternal; David believed that it was still in effect (1 Chron 16:15-18) as well as the Apostle Peter (Acts 3:12-26).

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