

St Thomas' Home Group Study Notes

ABRAM to ABRAHAM

Week 2 - Promise and Covenant

Read: Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-7 & 15-16

God's promises to Abraham consist of three separate parts:

The Promised Land

Abraham is called by God to leave Ur and go to a place known as Canaan, (*Gen 11:31*). The land of Canaan later became known as Israel. Israel was named after Abraham's grandson Jacob (*see Gen 32:28*) and is often referred to as the promised land because God promised to give the land to the descendants of Abraham.

The promise of the descendants

God promised Abraham that he would make 'a great nation' out of him – 'you will have very many descendants', (*Gen 15:5*). God later changed Abram's name to Abraham (*Gen 17:5*) meaning 'father of many nations'.

The promise of blessing and redemption

God promises to bless Abraham and all of his descendants.

In Ch. 17 God makes a covenant with Abraham. As a sign of this covenant, God requires Abraham to remove his foreskin and the foreskin of all Jewish boys after him, (*Gen 17:10-11*). This process is known as circumcision and is a sign of the Abrahamic covenant. *From: www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize*

Q. What is the difference between a promise and a covenant?



"Genesis 15 is not so much about Abraham's extraordinary belief or trust, as it is about the measures taken by God, to assure Abraham that belief or trust is the right response. The focus of the chapter is not on Abraham's faith, but on God's faithfulness."

'Abraham', Meg Warner

Q. Do you agree?

When we worry that our commitment to spiritual discipline is not strong enough, or that our faith is not sure enough, Genesis 15 can remind us that our relationship with God is not wholly dependent on us.

Q. Do you think God draws closer to us when our spiritual discipline and our faith are flagging, and we are experiencing times of feeling very distant from him?

In Gen 17:5, God changes Abram's name to Abraham; in 17:15 he also changes Sarai's name to Sarah.

Q. What does it mean that God makes these changes in Abram's and Sarai's names?

Q. What does it say about God, and what does it say about the relationship between God and Abram and God and Sarai?

Q. If we think about who normally gives us our names, does it make a difference in our answer here?

"The promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."
(*Rom 4:16*)

Q. What does it mean for us to be children of Abraham?