God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 15:1-21

Bible Memory Verse

Genesis 15:6 NIV

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited to him as righteousness.

Bible Story

> *"O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? ...you have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir" (Gen 15:2-3).*

There was a problem. Abram and Sarai did not have any children at this point. Any blessing from God would pass on to a servant in their household. But God already had that problem thought through. "...a son coming from your own body will be your heir. Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be" (Gen 15:4-5). The Lord issued another promise to Abram: you and your wife will have a son and your descendants will be like the stars in the heavens. Wow! That's a lot of descendants!

And what did Abram think? "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Abram's belief and faith in the Lord's promise made him a part of the beginning of the special people of God.

"I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it," said the Lord (Gen 15:7). God also promised Abram a place to live, a land to call his own. This land is later known as the Promised Land.

There was another problem. Abram and Sarai were very old. What did they do about it? They took matters into their own hands... (Uh-Oh! What usually happens when we take matters into our own hands? Yeah, bad stuff.) Sarai gave Abram her servant, Hagar, to have a child with, Abram and Hagar ended up with a son and he was named Ishmael.

Consequently, Sarai was really jealous of Hagar because she had a son by her husband. So Sarai mistreated Hagar, who in turn ran away into the desert. While Hagar was in the desert, the angel of the Lord appeared to her and ministered to her and comforted her. And Hagar returned to the household of Abram.

About thirteen years later, the Lord appeared to Abram and said:

> *"I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.*
>
> *"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where now you are an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God" (Gen 17:1-8).*

The Lord God just promised himself to newly-named Abraham to be his God, to make him the father of many nations, and to give them the land of Canaan as his own. Forever. That's a long time!

And as a sign of the covenant, the Lord God commanded Abraham and his descendants to be circumcised—a mark on every male that reminded the people who their God was, what their mission in the world was, and what land was theirs. (Today, the sign of the "New Covenant" is baptism). So Abraham and his entire household and subsequent descendants were circumcised as a sign of the everlasting covenant with the Lord God.

Furthermore, God changed Sarai's name to Sarah because she was to become the mother of all nations.

Life Application

Our faith in Jesus' promises is just like Abram's belief in God's promises. Abram believed that what God said was true and he was "inside" the special people of God. If we believe that what Jesus said and did was true, then we are "inside" the special people of God, too. We are then counted as a part of the family of God.

Jesus promised that if we believe in him then we would have eternal life—our souls would not perish, but live in God's kingdom forever.

Do you believe in Jesus' promise?

Review Questions

1. How many descendants did God promise Abraham? As many as the stars in the sky.
2. Did Abraham believe that God would give him a son? Yes.
3. Why did Abraham and Sarah think that they needed to take matters into their own hands regarding a son? Why couldn't they have children? Because they were really old.
4. Who did Abraham have a son with? Hagar.
5. What was Abraham and Hagar's son's name? Ishmael
6. What did Sarah do to Hagar and why? She mistreated Hagar because she was jealous.

Coloring Sheet

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