

END-TIMES ISSUES

#22 Abrahamic covenant – Introduction.

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... was God's kindness to the righteous.

* (Or something similar to this.)

3

Did the human race learn? NOPE!!

[The LORD said], "... every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood."
Gen 8:21b (NIV)

☞ Once the Flood was over, the human race once again set out to prove that what God said was correct.

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; **otherwise we will be scattered** over the face of the whole earth."
Genesis 11:4 (NIV)

☞ *United* in rebellion against God, they "came together," instead of scattering, with one express purpose. (The "heavens" at the top of the tower was a place for the worship of false gods.)

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What would God do?

☞ Fortunately, God said "No" to another global flood judgment.

Perhaps, if he hadn't said this, we'd be having a global flood every few generations!

☞ This time, when the people were *united* in rebellion, he sent a judgment that would destroy that union, and make it *impossible* for worldwide cooperation in rebellion against God... until the *final* rebellion (in the end-times).

[The LORD said ...] "Come, let's go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech."
So from there **the LORD scattered them** throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city.
Genesis 11:7-8 (CSB)

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☞ The people, though scattered, would *still* be in rebellion against God. But there would be restraints. They could not *unite* in rebellion.

- Each group would pursue its own false gods, have its own values and agendas, and war against other groups that had *different* gods, values and agendas.

KEY ISSUE: GOD WILL KEEP HIS PROMISE.

WE LOOKED AT THIS LAST TIME.

- God made a promise of hope in Genesis 3:15.
- NOTHING** that the Serpent (Satan) and his "seed" does will prevent God from keeping his promise. The *evilness* of people will not prevent the *goodness* of God!

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
Genesis 3:15 (BSB)

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It's WITHIN THIS DARK CONTEXT that God would pick one man who was still willing to trust him... and through him, would change the world.

→ And that man wouldn't even live long enough to see the changes occur!

Then the LORD said to Abram, * "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you."

Genesis 12:1 (BSB)

* (Name later changed to Abraham.)

WHO WAS THIS MAN?

God called him to leave his home in Ur, and go to the land of Canaan.

More details about this man.

- God called him from the land of the Chaldeans (probably southeast of Babylon). *He obeyed God.*

... the LORD, the God who chose Abram, who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans ...

Nehemiah 9:7b (BSB)

- He came from a family that worshipped other gods. *He abandoned the gods of his family.*

"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your fathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates and worshipped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through all the land of Canaan, and I multiplied his descendants.'"

Joshua 24:2b-3a (BSB)

- He obeyed God, even though he did not know where he was going. *He trusted God.*

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, without knowing where he was going.

Hebrews 11:8 (BSB)

- God promised him many descendants, even though he was childless. *He trusted God.*

By faith Sarah, even though she was barren and beyond the proper age, was enabled to conceive a child, because she considered Him faithful who had promised.

And so from one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Hebrews 11:11-12 (BSB)

- God kept his promise and provided them with a son. God specifically stated that his promise would be through that son.
- Then he told Abraham to offer that son as a sacrifice to him. If Abraham did this, the only possible way that God could keep his promise would be by bringing Isaac back to life. *Abraham trusted God.*

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac on the altar. He who had received the promises was ready to offer his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "Through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned." ← Genesis 21:12

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and in a sense, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Hebrews 11:17-19 (BSB)

THE ONLY OPTION, IF ISAAC HAD DIED!

ABRAHAM AND THE LIFE OF FAITH.

- Abraham wasn't sinless; but his life was characterized by trust in God. *This is the same type of trust that we need!*

Abram believed the LORD, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:6 (BSB)

- The New Testament quotes this. The context of these passages teaches us that his faith and our faith are similar in nature.

IN ROMANS → For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:3 (BSB)

IN GALATIANS → So also, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Galatians 3:6 (BSB)

- This trust characterized his life before Isaac was born.

GOD PROMISED; ABRAHAM TRUSTED...

Against all hope, **Abraham in hope believed** and so became the father of many nations, just as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."

EVEN THOUGH THE SITUATION WAS HOPELESS...

Without weakening in his faith, he acknowledged the decrepitness of his body (since he was about a hundred years old) and the lifelessness of Sarah's womb.

BECAUSE HE WAS CONVINCED THAT GOD COULD DO WHAT HE PROMISED HE WOULD DO.

Yet he did not waver through disbelief in the promise of God, but was **strengthened in his faith** and gave glory to God, **being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised.**

This is why "it was **credited to him as righteousness.**"

Romans 4:18-22 (BSB)

★ THIS IS THE TYPE OF FAITH WE NEED! ★

- This trust was proved *genuine* when Abraham obeyed God's command to sacrifice Isaac on the altar.

GENUINE FAITH WILL EXPRESS ITSELF...

Was not our father Abraham justified by what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

AND WILL PROVE ITSELF TO BE GENUINE.

GENUINE FAITH WILL NOT CHOOSE TO REMAIN "ALONE."

You see that his faith was working with his actions, and his faith was perfected by what he did.

And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "**Abraham believed God**, and it was **credited to him as righteousness**," and he was called a friend of God.

As you can see, a man is justified by his deeds and not by faith alone.

James 2:21-24 (BSB)

★ THIS IS THE TYPE OF FAITH WE NEED! ★

Faith was "credited to him" as righteousness?

- When people have this type of faith, God declares them "righteous."
- HOW? Abraham didn't know all the details. He simply trusted God to deal with it. Today, we recognize that *Jesus* made it possible, by exchanging *his* righteousness for *our* sin. But we still need to *trust* him to do it.

God made Him who knew no sin to be **sin** on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the **righteousness** of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (BSB)

- Jesus paid* for our sin, and *rewarded* us with his righteousness.
- We have no righteousness of our own, and deserve none from him. But God views *Jesus'* righteousness as though it was *ours*. He "credits" it to our account.

Abraham's "great" faith?

- When Abraham trusted God, God blessed him. But it all started out with that initial trust in God, back when he was still living in Ur of the Chaldees, when he only had to make the *first* step!
- Then*, he could move on to the second step, then to the third step, and so on ...

Something to think about...

- Does God work this way with us? Does he expect us to start out with *massive* faith... or with *small but growing* faith?
- We may daydream about doing "big things" for God; but what if he just wants us to be faithful in "small things"? God can take "small things" and grow them – even if we, like Abraham, don't live to see the final outcome.

Could God have called someone else?

- There is no record of God making this offer to anyone else. Perhaps there was nobody else who trusted him.
- But if the offer had been made to someone else, they obviously didn't accept it. The conversation might have gone this way:

THE "FORGOTTEN LOSER"

GOD

LEAVE YOUR HOME AND GO TO A LAND I'LL SHOW YOU.

WHERE IS THAT?

JUST TRUST ME.

THAT'S UNREASONABLE! IF YOU DON'T TELL ME WHERE, THEN I'M NOT GOING!

IT WILL BE JUST AS YOU SAY. YOU'RE *NOT* GOING.

ABOUT THE "ABRAHAMIC" COVENANT.

- It started out with just a promise: "If you go, then I will do these things for you."

Then the LORD said to Abram, "**Leave** your country, your kindred, your father's household, and **go to the land I will show you.**"

I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:1-3 (BSB)

- If Abraham had chosen to *not* trust God, there would have been no "Abrahamic" covenant. (God would have found someone else. Abraham would have been the forgotten loser.)

(*"Abrahamic"* – the suffix *"-ic"* means it's related to Abraham.)

"One step at a time."

- Answering this call required Abraham to take one step of trust, then another, then another...
- As we read about Abraham's life, we see God making one promise (or covenant) after another – each being a situation in which Abraham had an opportunity to have *increased trust* in God.
- As Abraham's trust increased, so did the greatness of God's promises (and covenants) to him.



- Some people argue that each of these "steps" was a separate covenant; others argue that they were all parts of one expanding covenant. Either way, it's all there and it's all wonderful!

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What are some of these promises/covenants?

(A quick glance today; more next time.)

- ✓ He (though childless) would someday be a nation... even *many* nations.
- ✓ God would give him the land of Canaan. (But God would wait until the inhabitants had become so corrupt that they *needed* to be destroyed).
- ✓ Abraham would be blessed, and be a blessing to others. So would his "seed" (the word is both singular and plural).
- ✓ Other nations would be blessed or cursed, depending on how they treated him.

- ➔ Some (if not all) aspects of these promises/covenants are described as lasting "forever."
- ➔ Some of these promises/covenants expand in scope... to the point that they now apply to us!

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Our Mission?

- ✚ We can't appreciate this covenant (or group of covenants) with Abraham, without understanding the *context* in which it was made: the whole world once again in rebellion against God.
- ✚ The promises and covenants God made with Abraham were only possible because Abraham trusted God to keep his promises. And as Abraham's trust increased, so did the greatness of the promises and covenants.

This week: Focus on the nature of Abraham's faith.

✚ *This is the same type of faith that God wants us to have!*

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Credits (1)

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