

Genesis

Moses

Discussion 6

Genesis Chapter 15- The Promise to Abram

Genesis Chapter 16- Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis Chapter 17- Covenant and Obedience

Name: “Genesis” is a Greek word meaning “beginning.” The book tells of the beginning of everything except God who is without beginning or end.

Author: Moses

Date: 1500 BC Moses lived about as far on the other side of Christ as Columbus, who discovered America, lived on this side of Christ.

Outline:

- A. History of the human race (Gen. 1-11)
 - a. Creation
 - b. Fall
 - c. Flood
 - d. Tower of Babel (Nations)
- B. History of the chosen race, the Jews (Gen. 12-50)
 - a. Abraham
 - b. Isaac
 - c. Jacob
 - d. Joseph

	Human Race	Abraham to the Chosen Race
Genesis	Chapter 1 to Chapter 11 (2000 years?)	315 years

MAN’S FALL INTO SIN—GENESIS 3-4

I. What the Bible teaches about Satan

“The old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Revelation 12:9) apparently was first created as one of the **cherubim** (Ezekiel 28:1-15), having great position and authority. He fell from his heavenly estate through his rebellious attitude of **pride** (Isaiah 14:12-15).

After the creation of the earth he tempted mankind likewise to **act in self-will** instead of God's will (Genesis 3:1-6). His **plan is to dethrone God** in His universe and in the hearts of men. God promises **Satan's ultimate destruction** through the "seed of woman," Christ (Genesis 3:15).

Three times Jesus called him "**the prince of this world**" (John 14:30, etc.). As "the prince of the power of air" (Ephesians 2:2) he heads a vast host of demons. The present world system organized upon the principles of force, greed, selfishness, ambition, and sinful pleasure is his work. In His own time, **God's full judgement will come upon Satan** (Revelation 20:10) and the absolute, undivided sovereignty of God over His whole universe will be restored.

HISTORY OF THE CHOSEN RACE—GENESIS 12-50

The Plan of Redemption

As the events of the Old Testament start to unfold there is the continuous development of God's plan to bring into the world the Redeemer, through the chosen race, Israel, in the chosen land, Palestine. Notice how the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are all connected with this plan of redemption.

The Purpose of Having One Chosen Race was:

- To keep alive the worship of the one true God.
- to illustrate to other nations, the blessedness of serving the true God.
- To receive and preserve God's Word, the Bible.
- To give Birth to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The Father of the Chosen Race—Abraham

Date: Abraham lived about 2000 B.C.

Adam	Abraham	Christ	Today
4000 B.C.	2000 B.C.		2000 A.D.

Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the life and witness of Abram and for the trust he demonstrated when he refused to accept any reward from the wicked king of Sodom, but relied on You to be his Shield and Defender. Thank You that I have nothing to fear in this evil world and that You supply all that I need according to Your riches in glory. What a wonderful promise that those who trust in You will never be disappointed and that the reward You promise to all Your children is over and above all that we could ask or think. May I live as a faithful witness to Your goodness and grace and never compromise the gospel of Christ. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”
(Genesis 15:1)

Discussion Questions:

1. When Abram was 99 years old God made a covenant with him. His name changed to Abraham, which means Father of many Nations. He promised him the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. God promised Abraham a son, Isaac by his wife, Sarai who was then 90 years old. Her name was changed to Sarah, which means “princess.” The covenant was to be with Abraham’s son, Isaac, not with Ishmael. The sign of this covenant was circumcision. (17)

Closing Prayer:

Prayers of the People: Darlene, Martha and her family, The View, Sharon Torgerson, Rickie, Dennis, Sharon and John and family, those struggling with alcohol and drug addiction, those who are struggling with illness, disease, anxiety, mental illness, loneliness, homelessness, financial struggles, and any other struggles that affect them personally and their family.

Our nations leaders, and all world leaders for rightful, peaceful, and moral guidance to the countries and their people.

Our Father,
Who art in Heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses.
As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee,
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary mother of God,
Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.
Amen

Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell; lead all souls to
Heaven, especially those in need of Thy mercy. Amen

Hail Holy Queen, mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee
do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning
and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of
mercy towards us. And after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy
womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy
Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the Holy Scriptures, the many truths they teach
me, and the lessons which I can learn from and apply in my daily life. I pray that
like Abram, my faith would not fail but grow and develop so that I trust You in all
the circumstances of life, even when they contradict my logic and seem to dictate the
opposite. Thank You for the privilege of prayer and the wonderful example of a man
who called on the name of the Lord and was not disappointed. Praise Your holy
name! AMEN.

Heavenly Father, as I read through the life of Abraham, I see how important it is to not only be saved by faith, but to live by faith, to walk by faith, and to pray in faith. And just as Abram had to learn many lessons as he sojourned in the land of Israel, I pray that as I journey through life, I would learn all that You have to teach me and become the person You have destined me to be. Help me to submit to You, resist the devil, and recognize the dangers of fleshly lusts and the wisdom of trusting Your Word. Thank You that You are working in my life from an eternal perspective. May my life be a testimony of Your goodness and grace. This I ask in Jesus' name, AMEN.

*“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”
(Genesis 17:5)*

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(Genesis 15:1)*

Discussion Notes:

THE PROMISE TO ABRAM
GENESIS 15:1-21

THE CONTEXT

Abram was not living in Canaan, moving from place to place, dwelling in tents. From a human perspective, there was no reason for him to not settle in one location, build permanent structures, fortify the area with a large wall—and even establish a small standing army. Had he done that, Abram would have been just like his neighbors. His neighbors may have been uncomfortable with a neighbor as wealthy as Abram, who is establishing another stronghold in their region, but in time, adjustments were made and it was yet another norm for their region. In this age we such great empires such as Egypt, which flourished with majestic architecture, art and politics. Even smaller city-states were fortified with surrounding walls, heave gates, and well-trained armies.

Much of Canaan consisted of the area known as the Fertile Crescent, an arc of land today that is well watered and productive.

This lifestyle is one that Abram—unlike his nephew Lot—chooses rather than setting himself inside of solid city walls. He spent the remainder of his life as a nomad, moving from place to place and pasturing his flocks where there was food, as dictated by the seasons. Again, this is not normal behavior for a man of great wealth and power (he actually defeated the armies of four kings-Genesis 14). To understand his motives, we must look more closely at the promise of God, for it was on this promise that Abram was making his decisions and building his future.

KEYS TO THE TEXT

GOD PROMISES HIMSELF: God has just promised that Abram's descendants will be innumerable (Genesis 13:14-16). Now He will reveal that greatest detail of all His promises: He Himself will be Abram's "exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1).

15:1. DO NOT BE AFRAID, ABRAM: We will soon see that Abram was afraid that God's promises could not come true—at least, not without his help. We already saw this in passages from study 1, and we will see if carried even further when Abram attempts to have a son through his wife's maid, Hagar. Fear leads people to move away from faith rather than toward it.

I AM YOU...EXCEEDINGLY GREAT REWARD: This was the very core of God's promises to Abram and to his descendants—God was promising Himself, not merely many descendants and a nice piece of real estate. Abram's descendants would be the ones to bring forth the Messiah, God's only Son, and through Him the entire human race would regain access into the presence of God.

ABRAM NEEDS REASSURANCE: Despite all of God's personal appearances to Abram, he is still unsure that the promises will come to pass.

2. WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME: This question was rather bold for a sinful man to pose to God, the God who created Him. It was almost as if Abram demanded some proof that God would keep His word. God had already visited Abram several times and reiterated His promise of an heir and a home. Abram had done nothing to deserve this promise—God did not owe him anything. Nevertheless, God here demonstrated His great mercy and patience by honoring Abram's request.

THE HEIR OF MY HOUSE IS ELIEZER OF DAMASCUS: To Abram, God's promise had stalled; so, adoption of a servant as the male heir—a well-known contemporary Mesopotamian custom—was the best officially recognizable arrangement to make it come to pass. Well humanly speaking.

3. YOU HAVE GIVEN ME NO OFFSPRING: Abram's question, "What will You give me?" (Genesis 15:2) became an accusation: "You have given me no offspring." It had been years since God first appeared to Abram and promised him descendants, and yet no son had been born. We need to remember that Abram was only a man, and even a man of great faith will need some encouragement from time to time if he is to hold firm to trusting God's word.

4. THIS ONE SHALL BE YOUR HEIR: That is, the man named Eliezer of Damascus (Genesis 15:2).

ONE WHO WILL COME FROM YOUR OWN BODY SHALL BE YOUR HEIR: Abram would later take this promise in the narrowest interpretation, allowing his wife to persuade him to have a child with one of his servants. God would make it more abundantly clear to Abram in the future that his heir would come from his own body but from his wife's body too. The difficulty for Abram was that he was at least eighty years old by this time, and his wife at least seventy. God was asking him to place his faith in something that was completely impossible.

ABRAM'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: Abram believes God's word—even before the Lord has sealed the covenant in ritual fashion—and God counts this as righteousness.

6. HE BELIEVED IN THE LORD: the importance of this statement will return in study 6, but for now it is important to recognize that this was at the core of Abram's character: he believed God. God was asking him to believe in something that was impossible, and his own eyes told him that the promise hadn't come true for years already. Abram had no guarantee to bank on other than God's word, but he still chose to believe in the Lord.

HE ACCOUNTED IT TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS: Abram was the "father of our faith," and as Christians we are called "sons and daughters of Abraham." The reason for this high honor is that Abram demonstrated *faith*, which is the basic ingredient of being reconciled with God. The New

Testament uses Abram as an example of those who are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. “Now it was not written for [Abram’s] sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans:23-25).

THE COVENANT: God has Abram set out his culture’s equivalent of a legal contract. By performing this ritual, God binds Himself to fulfill His purpose.

8. HOW SHALL I KNOW THAT I WILL INHERIT IT: Abram’s question was not a veiled accusation at the delayed fulfillment of God’s promise but a genuine request for information and assurance. In response, God affirmed His covenant with Abram through a remarkable ceremony.

9. BRING ME A THREE-YEAR-OLD HEIFER: This instruction was God beginning a ceremony. This ceremony would be an unconditional covenant between where God committed himself to fulfill this covenant regardless of what Abram did—no commitment was required of Abram for validation. The animals that God commanded Abram to sacrifice were the same ones that he would later include in the law He reveals to Moses. The law of sacrifices were complex and demanding, but one thing that remained consistent throughout the entire law was that without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

10. CUT THEM IN TWO: Ancient covenants often involved this form of animal sacrifice. An animal was cut in half, and the two of the covenant would walk between them. This was a symbolic way of saying, “May the same happen to me if I do not keep this covenant.” (Jeremiah 34:18-19).

12. DEEP SLEEP FELL UPON ABRAM: It is not specified how God appeared to Abram, each time he visited. However, we can see that it appears that at this point He only appeared to him in dreams and visions. God did not appear to Abram in person until he was circumcised.

PROPHECIES OF THE FUTURE: God now reveals to Abram some of His plan for the future of His descendants. These prophecies foretell of Israel’s captivity and escape from Egypt.

13. YOU DESCENDANTS WILL BE STRANGERS: Eventually the Israelites will become slaves in Egypt for 430 years before God leads them out under the leadership of Moses. Remember that Moses himself was writing Genesis during the very exodus. (*An Exodus is a mass departure of people, especially emigrants.*) These historical passages undoubtedly helped the Israelites find encouragement during their wanderings in the wilderness.

14. THE NATION WHOM THEY SERVE I WILL JUDGE: God would send a plague on Egypt to force Pharaoh to release the Israelites, and He would finally destroy the Egyptian army when it pursued His people into the wilderness.

THEY SHALL COME OUT WITH GREAT POSSESSIONS: God directed the Israelites to “spoil the Egyptians” before leaving (Exodus 11:2)

Exodus 11:2- 3 Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold.”

15. A GOOD OLD AGE: Abram lived to be 175 (Genesis 25:7).

THE INIQUITY OF THE AMORITES IS NOT YET COMPLETE: God shows His mercy and patience repeatedly in the Book of Genesis, offering men and women many opportunities to repent to find salvation. But, the time did come when a man’s—and a nation’s—stubborn wickedness reached its full measure. At that point, the justice of God fell. Once the iniquity of the Canaanites (broadly defined ethnically as the Amorites) reached its full measure, God would send His people into the land to destroy them.

17. A SMOKING OVEN AND A BURNING TORCH: These items are symbols of the presence of God, who through His covenant, solemnly promised by divine oath to fulfill His word to Abram. Old Testament manifestations of God’s presence frequently emphasized His justice and power. In this case, the oven and torch could suggest God’s burning zeal and His potential wrath.

PASSED BETWEEN THOSE PIECES: Abraham never passed through the sacrificed animals—only God passed through them. This is because Abram had not part in the fulfillment of this covenant—God would make good on His promises to Abram regardless of the future actions of Abram and his descendants.

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HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

Genesis 16:1-16

THE CONTEXT

We have seen that God promised an heir to Adam many times over. The Lord had told Abraham that he would become a great nation and that that number of his descendants would be so large that they would be difficult to count—like the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:4). God had also made it quite clear that this promise would come through a son of miraculous birth, a child born through the union of Abram and his wife Sarai.

However, God had promised this many times over a period of at least ten years. Ten years is a long time to wait for a promised son to be delivered—especially when you are seventy-five years old to begin with! It would be a miracle if a woman in her late seventies gave birth to a child, especially if her husband were in his mid-eighties.

So it's not surprising to find that Sarai was beginning to have doubts about God's promise. To make matters worse, she and her husband began to *act* on their doubts, rather than on their faith. As a result, they found themselves taking matters into their own hands, falling into sin, and making poor decisions.

Sarai's scheme did lead to the birth, as her handmaid Hagar bore Abram a son named Ishmael. But God rejected Ishmael as the son of promise and made it clear that Ishmael could not share in Isaac's inheritance. We will soon discover that Paul used these two young men to illustrate another truth of Scripture: man's works cannot play any part in God's plan of salvation, for we are saved by grace alone.

KEYS TO THE TEXT

WRESTLING WITH DOUBT: Abram and Sarai are still waiting for the appearance of Isaac. It's been at least ten years since God promised a

son, so they decide to take matters into their own hands, helping God's plan along.

16:1. NOW SARAI, ABRAM'S WIFE: The events in this passage take place prior to Abram's circumcision and change of name in Genesis 17. The circumcision marked a new relationship with God and Abram—a sort of “rebirth” or renaissance in which Abram receive his new name. This will become more important as we move into the family of Christ.

HAD BORNE HIM NO CHILDREN: God had promised Abram that he would have a son and countless descendants, but that son would not arrive until after Abram had been circumcised. This was part of God's picture of the final redemption plan, when we are reborn into the family of Christ.

AN EGPYTIAN MAIDSERVANT: The nation of Egypt is frequently used in Scripture to represent the world's system. There is a good possibility that Hagar was one of the servants that Pharaoh gave to Abram during his sojourn there when Abram was trying to escape a famine in Canaan.

2. THE LORD HAS RESTRAINED ME FROM BEARING CHILDREN: Although this statement was technically true as he is the giver of life. This shows us a lack of faith in her thinking—she was growing impatient waiting for the Lord to fulfill His promise. There may even be a degree of resentment in her words, as though she was blaming God for her childlessness.

I SHALL OBTAIN: Sarai's focus was more on herself and her plans than on the larger picture. God had promised more than a son for Abram and Sarai: He promised an entire nation and descendants that could not be numbered. In the grand scheme of things, he promised a Redeemer—the Seed who would one day save mankind from sin. God's plan certainly included the personal longings of Abram and Sarai from a son, yet it was far, far bigger than that. The results of Sarai's scheme would also last far longer than she anticipated.

CHILDREN BY HER: God had told Abram, “One who will come from your own body shall be your heir” (Genesis 15:4). Although the son from Hagar would be of Abram's own body, but the Lord meant that the heir would be born through his proper union with his own wife, Sarai. The Lord had decreed in the garden of Eden that a man would “be joined to his wife/partner, and they

would become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), and Abram would have understood this from the Lord’s promise.

SARAI TAKES CHARGE: Sarai now puts into action her plan of assisting God in the business of producing and heir.

ABRAM HEADED THE VOICE OF SARAI: Abram repeated the sin of Adam by placing himself under the spiritual authority of his wife (Genesis 3:17). The Lord had just come to Abram in a vision and made a formal covenant with him (Genesis 15). God had bolstered Abram’s faith and encouraged him, but then Abram turned right around and allowed his wife to take the lead.

3. SARAI, ABRAM’S WIFE, TOOK HAGAR HER MAID: Eve had perceived a problem that didn’t exist, thanks to the direct lies of the serpent, and she took matters into her own hands to resolve that nonexistent problem. Sarai did the same, she perceived that there was a problem with God’s promise being fulfilled, so she took matters into her own hands to resolve it. The results in both cases were disastrous and affected all of mankind. The son born through Hagar will lead to the Arabic nations, which are still at war with Israel even today.

4. HER MISTRESS BECAME DESPISED: this was just the start of the bad plan.

5. MY WRONG BE UPON YOU: Sara’s statement was grossly unfair, as the entire plan was hers in the first place. Yet it is also quite literally true, for the Lord would hold Abram responsible for abdicating his spiritual authority in the home, just as He held Adam responsible in Eden.

GOD MEETS HAGAR: Hagar flee from Sarai’s harsh treatment and goes into the wilderness. There she meets the Angel of the Lord.

7. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD: This individual spoke though He were distinct from Yahweh, yet also spoke in the first person as though He were indeed to be identified as Yahweh Himself. Hagar, in seeing this angel, believed she had seen God. The Angel of the Lord, who does not appear after the birth of Christ. This is often identified as the preincarnate Christ.

SHUR: This was south of Palestine and east of Egypt, which meant that Hagar attempted to return home to Egypt.

9. HAGAR'S, SARAI'S MAID... RETURN TO YOU MISTRESS, AND SUBMIT: The Angel's salutation and instruction indicated that He considered the mistress-servant relationship between Sarai and Hagar to be intact. Rebelling and leaving quickly was not the correct solution.

GOD'S PLAN FOR HAGAR: The Angel of the Lord now reveals the plan that God has for Hagar and her descendants.

10. I WILL MULTIPLY: Hagar might have been a servant, but she would also become the mother of many, thus making Abram the father of two groups of innumerable descendants.

11. CALL HIS NAME ISHMAEL: This name meant "God hears." Hagar, the servant, would never forget how God had heard her cry of affliction.

12. A WILD MAN... AGAINST EVERY MAN: Ishmael would be like the untamable desert onager (wild donkey), with a fiercely aggressively and independent nature. Ishmael's Arabic descendants would also exhibit these traits.

13. YOU-ARE-THE-GOD-WHO-SEES: Hagar recognized the Angel as none other than God Himself, and her astonishment at having been the object of His gracious attention led her to ascribe this name to Him. The revelation also led her to call Him "The One Who Lives and Sees Me."

HIS SON...ISHMAEL: Ishmael was born c. 2079.

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CONVENANT

Genesis 17

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between Me and You. Genesis 17:11

Verse 1: This passage outlines the covenant which God made with Abram. As the chapter unfolds, you will discover that covenants provide a basis for a relationship. A husband and a wife are in a relationship, but what would that relationship be without the marriage vows, the witnesses, and the covenant seals (in the signed covenant and the rings)? Both parties in the marriage enjoy a huge sense of comfort and security knowing that the relationship is bound in a covenant. God's covenant with His people is not much different from this. In this chapter we find that God's covenant stipulates the parties, promises, signs, and requirements. When a contract or an arrangement is sealed with blood, the serious nature of the covenant is confirmed and solidified. Such was the case with the covenant God made with Abram. He sealed it with the blood of beasts in Chapter 15, and here Abram sealed it with the circumcision of the foreskin of his own flesh.

The parties in this contractual arrangement are laid out in verses 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 19. Party #1 in the covenant is God Himself. As He introduced Himself in the first verse as "El Shaddai," or "Almighty God," it is clear that Abram was covenanting with the one and only, sovereign Lord of the Universe. There is no other god that is supreme over Him. There can only be one God who is all powerful. Because His power is absolute, nobody can prevent Him from accomplishing His purposes. He most certainly would uphold His end of the contract. The second party in the covenant is mentioned multiple times throughout this passage—God made the covenant with Abram and his seed. It was not just Abram. God was in the covenant with a people, not just a person. Thus, we begin to see how God relates to both individuals and to corporate bodies. In the New Testament, we find God relating to a visible church body. The Church of Thessalonica was "in God and in Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:1). The candlesticks of revelation 2 and 3 represented local, visible churches in Asia Minor. It was these churches that were in relationship with Christ Himself.

Verses 2-9. These verses set forth expectations placed on Abram in the covenant. He must walk before God's face with sincerity. The word sometimes translated "perfect" is better rendered as "sincerity." To walk before the face of God is to maintain a right relationship with God. It is to love Him and to desire His presence. In each of our relationships with God. It is to love Him and to desire His presence. In each of our relationships in life, we experience times of closeness and times of distance. We may even offend one another from time to time. But it is quite another thing to break a relationship and to cease all fellowship with one another. So, according to the stipulations

of this covenant, Abram must continue to walk in the relationship with God, with sincerity of heart. A similar idea is expressed in 1 John 3:6. "Who ever abides in him, does not sin: he who has sinned has seen Him, but does not know Him." Any whom God has saved will hate their sin. They cannot bear to live with it. When they do sin, they confess and repent of that sin because of their love for God. This is the walk of faith and love.

Yahweh also outlined His part in this covenant. Reiterating many of the blessings already laid out in previous encounters. He promised that Abram would be the father of many nations. Kings would issue from him. The promise of land was also included. But now the heart of the covenant is found in verse 7: "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." This same covenant promise is repeated many times throughout the Old Testament (Zechariah 8:8, Hosea 2:23, Jerimiah 7:23, 30:20). It is also repeated for Gentile Christians in Romans 9:26, and 2 Corinthians 6:16. This is the reason why many Gentile Christians consider themselves included in this original covenant made with Abram.

Note that God made this covenant with both the father and the children. The same wording is used in the New Covenant promise in Acts 2:38, where the promise of the regenerating and sanctifying Spirit of God was given to the fathers gathered to hear Peter's sermon. Peter told these men that the promise was to them and to their children. This is standard operating procedure for the covenants God makes with men. Therefore, can we say that the promise is extended to both men listening to Peter's sermon and to their children? For 1600 years, the descendants of Abraham believe that the promise extended to both men and their children. Was Peter going to disenfranchise them of this idea in this first sermon after Christ's ascension? Of course, he made no such clarification. That is why many families to this day believe that their children may be included in these covenant promises. They are just as much part of the visible people of God on earth as Abraham's children were in the Old Testament.

Verses 10-14. Following the introduction of the parties and the terms of the covenant comes the outward sign of the covenant. A sign is an outward indication of an inward spiritual reality. In other instances, God has provided outward visible symbols of spiritual realities, such as the rainbow after the

Flood and the blood of the Passover lamb placed over the doorways of Israelite homes during the Exodus.

This outward sign of this covenant is circumcision. Since the flesh to be removed in the circumcisions is only found on men and boys, women were exempted from this circumcision throughout history of the Old Testament. Why should God limit the circumcision rite to the males in the household? The same question may be asked for the Deuteronomy 16:16 mandate requiring only the “males” to appear before God three times each year for the feasts. Furthermore, it was the “males” commissioned by the Apostle Paul to pray “everywhere,” in households or in churches, with the “lifting up of holy hands” (1 Timothy 2:8). Since every man is the head of his home, as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:25), and every boy is a head-in-training, the mark of the covenant was deemed unnecessary for the women.

God is very serious about this sign of the covenant, as those children not circumcised would be “cut off from the people” with whom God was establishing a relationship. The visible body of the Old Testament church was made up of those who were circumcised into it.

To be a member of the church in the New Testament, one must be baptized. Circumcision is no longer necessary. Both circumcision and baptism are signs of the removal of the “filthy flesh.” They are both pictures of cleansing and regeneration. Yet, there are several important differences between baptism and circumcision. While both of them signify the regeneration of the heart, circumcision is a painful and somewhat arduous experience, involving a bloody excision. Baptism is a simple bath, or cleansing, using water. Also, as already mentioned, women and girls were not circumcised. However, the first references to women baptisms are found in Acts 8:12 and Act 16:14.

Verse 15-27. A man’s name will define him, especially if God gives him the name. And that is what happened to Abram when God changed his name to Abraham, which means “the father of nations.” Appropriately, He also changed Sarai’s name to Sarah, or “princess.” Still, Abraham was somewhat weak in faith concerning the promise of posterity. He still suggested Ishmael as a suitable “son of the covenant” who might walk before Yahweh in covenant faithfulness. But God again rejected the son of the bondwoman in the covenant blessings, though He still promised him temporal blessings. From this we learn

that even those who are circumcised into the covenant people of God may eventually find themselves excluded from the covenant.

Finally, God declared in on uncertain terms that Sarah would have a son. The name Yahweh assigned for his covenant lad was "Isaac," an ironic twist on the word "laughter." The laughter of incredulity would transfer to a laughter of joy and celebration upon the birth of his little boy. To this day we all have reason to laugh with joy upon hearing of the birth of Isaac, for our Savior came from the line of this man. The chapter ends with a testimony to Abraham's faithful obedience as he circumcised his entire household, both sons and servants.

Closing Prayer:

***Our Father,
Who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses.
As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.***

***Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee,
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed in the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary mother of God,
Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.
Amen***

***Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.***

O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in need of Thy mercy. Amen

Hail Holy Queen, mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us. And after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the Holy Scriptures, the many truths they teach me, and the lessons which I can learn from and apply in my daily life. I pray that like Abram, my faith would not fail but grow and develop so that I trust You in all the circumstances of life, even when they contradict my logic and seem to dictate the opposite. Thank You for the privilege of prayer and the wonderful example of a man who called on the name of the Lord and was not disappointed. Praise Your holy name! AMEN.

Heavenly Father, as I read through the life of Abraham, I see how important it is to not only be saved by faith, but to live by faith, to walk by faith, and to pray in faith. And just as Abram had to learn many lessons as he sojourned in the land of Israel, I pray that as I journey through life, I would learn all that You have to teach me and become the person You have destined me to be. Help me to submit to You, resist the devil, and recognise the dangers of fleshly lusts and the wisdom of trusting Your Word. Thank You that You are working in my life from an eternal perspective. May my life be a testimony of Your goodness and grace. This I ask in Jesus' name, AMEN.

*“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”
(Genesis 17:5)*