

God's Everlasting Covenant

presents

Study 2 – A Covenant Promise that Includes Land

In this lesson, we're going to study about God as a Covenant Maker who called a nation into being. That call is irrevocable – in other words, it's forever.

Let's go back to the call of Abraham to *LEAVE* and *GO*. Read Genesis 12:1-3 again. This is very significant.

1. QUESTION: Why do you think God asked Abraham (then Abram) to LEAVE his country, people and father's household? What would be the significance of that? Let's discuss that a bit. ANSWER:

- Because God wanted to separate him. He wanted to start something new.
- If God had said stay in the same place, and then asked you to be different, how easy or difficult would that be? Not easy at all.
- When you are surrounded by people who are living the same old way, and they are worshipping the same old gods, it is very difficult to change.
- God wanted to give Abraham a new beginning – he wanted to separate him from his past and start something new.
- God was calling into being a new nation of people, the likes of which had never been seen in the world before.

2. QUESTION: Why would God ask him to go to a different land? ANSWER: In order to start a new nation, there would have to be new laws, new ways of living, and a different country.

A. God is a **Covenant-Maker**

Let's focus first on the LEAVE part of God's command to Abraham. The first part of the call to Abraham and his descendants, the Jewish people, is about leaving what has been. How do we know that? Let's look at **Genesis 15:1-21**.

Let's review what God promised Abraham. QUESTION: What did God say?

1. He told him "I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." (v. 1)
2. Abraham will have an heir from his own body (v. 4)
3. Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the uncountable stars in heaven.
4. God reminded Abraham He was the Lord who brought him out of Ur to give him the land he was in.
5. God had Abraham cut animals in two and placed each half opposite the other.

- QUESTION: Does anyone know why God cut animals in half?
ANSWER: In ancient times, this was how you made a covenant. In the Holman Bible Handbook, it explains that animals were cut in half, and the promising, or covenanting partners, each walked between the halves or

pieces of the animals. By walking between the two halves, they were saying, “May it happen to me as it happened to these slain animals if I do not keep all the provisions of this covenant.” Ruth uttered the same type of oath in Ruth 1:17.

- It is interesting to note that the word for Covenant is “beriyth”, which means “to cut.” “Beriyth” is from the root of the word “barah” which means “to select”. Also, it can mean, “to choose.”
- QUESTION: Putting this all together, what do you think God was saying when He walked between the animals?
ANSWER: He swore an oath by Himself that He alone would uphold the covenant He made with Abraham. Only He, in the form of a burning torch, passed between the cut animals, and He did so, while Abraham slept!!! He is saying, “Abraham, I choose you and your descendants.” And I’m cutting this covenant with you, and I’m walking between these animals by myself to prove that this covenant is mine alone to keep. This means HE will uphold the Covenant, no matter what Abraham & his descendants do. It is unconditional.

B. God’s Sign of the Covenant: **Circumcision**

What is circumcision? Let’s read **Genesis 17:1-11**

To review, several significant things happened here:

- God confirmed the covenant (v. 2-4)
- God changed Abram’s name to Abraham (v. 5)
- God promises again to make Abraham very fruitful, to make him a great nation, kings would come from him (v.6)
- The covenant is declared by God to be an *everlasting* covenant between Abraham and his descendants (v. 7)
- God says He will be Abraham’s God and the God of his descendants
- The land of Canaan will be given as an *everlasting* possession
- God asks Abraham to circumcise himself and all the males in his household (v.10 & 11) as a sign of the covenant.

QUESTION: What is the significance of Abraham’s name change in Genesis 17 coinciding with God’s commandment of circumcision? In light of what we’ve just learned, let’s discuss what it could mean?

ANSWER:

- Circumcision was a confirmation, a sign that Abraham accepted God’s covenant.
- As God cut the animals into the two halves in Genesis 15, Abraham would also cut his foreskin and the foreskins of his descendants.

- It is symbolic of cutting away the things he had known prior to being called by God. It was a sign he agreed with God, that he wanted to obey Him, and do all that God had asked of him.
- It was a picture of separation from his father's (ancestor's) house and his father's or ancestors' land to accept the call of God, to be the father of many nations and go to the land God would show him. He was separating himself from what he was and agreeing to become what God called him to be. He was leaving home and starting his own family – a great big one!
- At the same time, his name was change from Abram = which means, as Brett taught us last week, “exalted father” to Abraham = “Father of a multitude” or “nations”. This also signified leaving the past and accepting his new mission, further evidence of separating himself, allowing God to set Him apart, cutting him away from the past to bring him into his new future.

From Genesis 15, we learn that God was, for the first time, revealing Himself as the **Covenant Maker**, that as He alone passed between the cut animals, He alone was promising to uphold the Covenant, no matter what – it was **unconditional**.

C. God's Covenant is **Irrevocable**

From Genesis 17, we learn that the Covenant He made was *everlasting* (**Genesis 17:7**). The word “everlasting” in the Hebrew is “owlam”, which means “concealed” or “hidden from sight”. The meaning is like when you're trying to look at the ocean, it goes on and on...the “vanishing point”. In other words, you can't see it. It's our word for “eternity.” That means this covenant will never end. So, we see for the first time that this Covenant is **irrevocable**. Paul, many centuries later, writes in the book of Romans 11:29, in speaking of the Jewish people, that “God's gifts and his call are **irrevocable**.”

Part II. Now let's look at the “GO” part of Genesis 12:1-3

A. Where did Abraham go? We're going to read in Genesis, and I'm going to ask you some seemingly redundant questions. Bear with me – and you'll see why in a few moments.

I. Altar 1: Read **Genesis 12:4-7**.

QUESTION: Where is the 1st place Abraham went? What happened while he was there? ANSWER: Abraham went to Shechem, God appear to him and said He would give his descendants this land. **Abraham built an altar to God** and thereby consecrated the Covenant.

This is clearly the land of the Canaanites and it is the first time God appears to Abraham in the land. This city is known as Nablus by Israeli Arabs. It is interesting to note here that in *God's Covenant With Israel*, Rabbi Benny Elon points out that

Shechem is where Joseph's tomb is located, and this holy site has been all but destroyed and desecrated by the Arabs.

2. Altar 2: Read **Genesis 12:8**

QUESTION: Where is the 2nd place Abraham went? What happened while he was there? ANSWER: To the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent on the west and Ai on the east. **He built an altar to God** and called on the name of the Lord. Abraham later came back to Beth El after a disastrous detour to Egypt (**Genesis 13:3**) and called again on the Lord. It is interesting to note here, and we read it last week, that Beth El is the same place God confirmed His covenant with Jacob and it is where Jacob also built an altar. (Genesis 28:10-19). Today, Beth El is located next to the Arab city of Ramallah. Again, let's read from Benny Elon's book on pp. 25: "Beth El is located adjacent to the Arab city of Ramallah, the place that arch-terrorist Yasser Arafat chose to be the capital of the Palestinian Authority. Arafat tried to rebuild an altar to Baal in Ramallah. This was an attempt to adopt a Canaanite identify in order to prove that Muslim claims to Israel preceded the Jewish connections to Israel. In 1998, the PA issued a postage stamp with the name and image of Baal on it."

3. Altar 3: Read **Genesis 13:14-18**

QUESTION: Where is the 3rd place Abraham went? What happened when he went there? He moved his tent in Hebron and **he built an altar there to the Lord**. We didn't read how it all transpired in Genesis 13:1-13, but it is interesting to note that Abraham built an altar in Hebron *after* he separated from Lot. God reconfirmed the covenant in Hebron, and it is fitting that Abraham built an altar there. Read *God's Covenant*, pp 27: Hebron is the City of the Patriarchs. Abraham purchased the land in Hebron. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were buried in Hebron. King David ruled from Hebron for seven years...The legacy of Hebron has been under attack by radical Islam in an attempt to break the physical link in the chain connecting God and Israel. The Jews of Hebron were forced to flee this holy city in 1929 after an Arab pogrom took the lives of 76 innocent Jewish residents. Jews returned to Hebron in 1967 despite many horrific attempts to drive them out. Dozens of Jews have been brutally murdered in Hebron...we must encourage Jews to continue to live in Hebron and protect the burial site of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs as well as the site where Abraham built the third altar to symbolize his covenant with God."

4. Altar 4: Read **Genesis 22: 1-2; 9-18**

QUESTION: What is this important place called where God tested Abraham, and what happened there?

ANSWER: Mt. Moriah – where God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering to Him. God appeared to him and in v. 15 swears by Himself that He will surely fulfill the Covenant He made with Abraham.

We know this is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Read **2 Chronicles 3:1**. Again, from Benny Elon's book on p. 28: "Modern history of the conflict in Israel has shown that

radical Islam has zeroed in on the sites fundamental to the covenant between God and Israel. Undermining sites that express the covenant between God and Israel is an expression of opposition to God.” Without getting into it too much because it is for a later study, let’s read **Ezekiel 8:15-16**. This was the time before the Babylonian captivity when men of Judah were praying with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east. The Lord said this was “detestable.”

QUESTION: Does anyone know about the custom of Muslims when they pray?

ANSWER: They pray with their backs toward Jerusalem, and facing East toward Mecca, their holiest site.

In all these places, Abraham built an altar. Interestingly, these four places are considered the four pillars of Judaism. All four were the places where God re-affirmed His covenant with Abraham. The most significant, or holiest site, would be Mt. Moriah, which symbolized the depth of Abraham’s relationship with God. What is also noteworthy is that all four altars are now in the West Bank, and are in control of the Palestinians. It is also interesting to note that in the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel reclaimed all these sites – but they relinquished them once again into Muslim hands in order to try to obtain peace.

Read **Zechariah 12:1-3**. We are watching the beginnings of the fulfillment of this prophecy with our very eyes.

Romans 9:33 says, “As it is written: See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”