

Abraham Genesis 15:1-21 17:1-14

Welcome to our second week looking at the covenants of the Old Testament. In this passage we look at the first glimpse of God's plan for history.

Community Questions:

Since we last met:

- 1) How has your understanding of God's holiness grown since studying Noah's covenant?
- 2) How do you balance a God of such terrible judgment with his grace?
- 3) Does watching world events such as the current wars make you long for more judgment or marvel that God restrains himself?

Abraham's Covenant Questions:

Read Genesis 15:1-21 What immediately stands out to you? Does anything in this passage particularly confuse you?

15:1-2

What a wonderful message that Abram receives from God. Yet his response in v2 is a dummy spit.

"Childlessness was viewed as an unmitigated disaster in the ancient world. Without children there was no-one to carry on the family line or preserve the family inheritance, no-one to look after you in old age, no-one to carry out the funerary rites and secure your souls rest in the life to come."

So the best that Abram can see to do is give his servant Eliezer the inheritance.

Q1. God had promised Abram children in Ch12 1-3. Why was he doubting? Was this doubt reasonable? How much do you think Abram knew about God at this time?

15:6-8

Q2. Look at v6 beside v8. Does this mix of responses remind you of your own journey? It is not so much that Abram is doubting in v8 but he wants to know what sign or evidence he may look to.

15:9-17 The Covenant Ritual

These days if you make a covenant or sign a contract we use paperwork and many signatures. Every page will need to have your initials on it to show you have read it. The words on the page then are the image of the agreement you have made. It

will usually list the consequences for default or failure as well. There might also be a ritual, such as the exchanging of rings to seal the covenant and symbolise it.

In the ancient near east they commonly made agreements with a ritual like we have here. By cutting animals in two and walking between them it symbolised the life and death nature of the contract. God is symbolized by the fire pot and flaming torch.

In chapter 16 we have the story of Abram taking his servant Hagar for a wife in order to get a son. How does this fit with his belief in 15:6. Are you encouraged by his human failings?

17:1-9

In chapter 17 God shows his constant faithfulness even though Abram has shown he is not worthy.

<p>Abram means Father Abraham means father of many</p>
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As you read this covenant you will see there are two sides. What does God promise to do for Abraham?

What does Abraham have to do in response?

In what ways is the relationship developed or advanced between Abraham and what it was with Noah?

How would you describe our covenant with God. What does he promise us and what do we have to do on our side of it?

Finally. Is the covenant with Abraham part of our heritage and history or is it of the Jews? (Gal 3:29 & Romans 4:16-17)