

God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12:1–9; 15:1–6; 17:1–8

THE BIG IDEA: God established a covenant with Abraham, promising to make him a great nation, give his descendants a land, and bless all the families of the earth through him. This covenant becomes a foundational part of God's unfolding plan of redemption, ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

Where We Are in the Biblical Story

Creation → Fall → Promise → Covenant → Israel → Christ → Church → New Creation

- **Creation:** God creates a good world and humanity in His image.
- **Fall:** Humanity rebels against God, and sin and death enter the world.
- **Promise:** God announces that the serpent will ultimately be defeated (Genesis 3:15).
- **Covenant:** God calls Abraham and establishes a covenant through which His redemptive plan will advance.

1. GOD INITIATES THE COVENANT, Genesis 12:1–3

God calls Abram to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house and go to a land God will show him.

God makes several promises:

- He will make Abram a great nation.
- He will bless Abram.
- He will make Abram's name great.
- Abram will be a blessing.
- God will bless those who bless Abram and curse the one who dishonors him.
- All the families of the earth will be blessed through Abram.

Key Truth: God initiates His redemptive plan. He calls Abram and makes promises before Abram has a nation, a land, or a son through whom those promises can be fulfilled.

2. GOD'S COVENANT IS BUILT ON HIS PROMISES, Genesis 12:1–9

- Abram obeys God's call and travels to Canaan. God promises to give the land to Abram's offspring.
- Abram builds altars and worships the Lord in the land.
- Notice the relationship between God's promise and Abram's response:
 - God speaks.
 - Abram believes and obeys.
 - Abram worships.

Key Truth: Faith responds to God's Word with trust, obedience, and worship.

3. GOD PROMISES ABRAM DESCENDANTS, Read: Genesis 15:1–6

- Abram is concerned because he has no son. God tells him that his own offspring will be his heir and directs him to look at the stars.
- God promises that Abram's descendants will be beyond counting.
- Genesis 15:6 declares: "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."
- This is one of the most important statements in the Old Testament.
- Abram is counted righteous because he believes God's promise—not because he has earned God's acceptance through perfect performance.

Key Truth: We are made right with God through faith, not by earning salvation through our works.

4. GOD ESTABLISHES AN EVERLASTING COVENANT, Genesis 17:1–8

- God identifies Himself as God Almighty and calls Abram to walk before Him faithfully.
- God changes Abram's name to Abraham, meaning he will be the father of a multitude.
- God promises:
 - Abraham will be exceedingly fruitful.
 - Nations and kings will come from him.
 - God will establish His covenant with Abraham and his descendants.
 - The covenant will be an everlasting covenant.
 - God will be God to Abraham and his descendants.
 - God will give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants.

Key Truth: God's covenant establishes a lasting relationship between God and Abraham's descendants and advances God's purposes in history.

5. UNDERSTANDING THE THREE GREAT PROMISES

God's promises to Abraham can be summarized in three major themes:

Promise	Meaning	Important Scriptures
Land	God promises a place for Abraham's descendants.	Genesis 12:7; 15:18–21
Seed	God promises descendants, a great nation, and ultimately the promised offspring through whom blessing comes.	Genesis 15:5; 17:4–6; Galatians 3:16
Blessing	God's purpose is to bless Abraham and bring blessing to all the families of the earth through him.	Genesis 12:2–3; 22:18

These promises form a framework for understanding much of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ.

6. WHY THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT MATTERS

A. It Answers the Problem of the Fall

After humanity's rebellion in Genesis 3, God begins unfolding His plan to redeem and bless. **Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:1–3**

B. It Explains the Story of Israel

God's promises to Abraham explain why his descendants become a distinct people and why the land of Canaan plays such a significant role in the Old Testament. **Genesis 15:18–21; Exodus 2:24; Deuteronomy 7:6–8**

C. It Explains How We Are Made Right with God

Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted as righteousness.

Paul uses Abraham to explain justification by faith. **Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1–5; Galatians 3:6–9**

D. It Points to Jesus Christ

Paul identifies Christ as the promised offspring through whom God's blessing reaches the nations. **Galatians 3:16; Matthew 1:1; Acts 3:25–26**

E. It Explains How the Nations Are Blessed

God's purpose was never merely to bless one man for his own benefit. His promise included all the families of the earth.
Through Christ, people from every nation can receive the blessing of salvation.
Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8, 14; Revelation 7:9–10

7. THE COVENANT AND THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

The Abrahamic covenant connects major themes throughout Scripture:

- **Genesis:** God calls Abraham and makes His promises.
- **Exodus:** God remembers His covenant as He delivers Israel.
- **Israel's history:** The nation lives in relation to God's covenant promises.
- **The Prophets:** God continues to speak of His purposes for His people and the nations.
- **The Gospels:** Jesus comes as the promised Son of Abraham.
- **Acts and the Epistles:** The Gospel goes to the nations, and the apostles explain the relationship between Abraham, faith, and Christ.
- **Revelation:** People from every nation worship God and the Lamb.

Key Truth: The Bible is one unfolding story of God's faithfulness to His promises and His plan to redeem a people through Jesus Christ.

8. WHAT SHOULD WE TAKE AWAY?

1. **God is the initiator of redemption.** We do not invent a way back to God; He reveals His plan.
2. **God is faithful to His promises.** His purposes do not depend on human strength alone.
3. **Faith trusts God's Word.** Abraham believed God even when fulfillment seemed impossible.
4. **God's blessing has a global purpose.** His plan reaches beyond one individual or nation to the families of the earth.
5. **Jesus is central to the covenant's redemptive purpose.** God's promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

The Biblical Story in One Sentence: God called Abraham, established His covenant promises, formed a people through whom His purposes would advance, and brought the promised blessing to the nations through Jesus Christ.