

Union United Methodist Church
Fall FOCUS Bible School, 2022
FOCUS: Followers Of Christ Understanding Scripture
Study: Book of Genesis

Week 4: October 19, 2022

Abrahamic Covenants

This Week's Study: **Genesis chapters 15 through 17**

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1. Recap & Reminder

- **Overview of Genesis**

The table below gives a breakdown of the chapters of Genesis, with themes that we shall be exploring in this study. We shall cover one theme per week. Our next week's study is Genesis 11 through 14 for the week.

From	To	Theme
1	4	Creation & The Fall, Original Sin
5	10	Adam through Noah: Judgement & New Covenant
11	14	Babel, A New Beginning in Abram
15	17	Abrahamic Covenants
18	20	Intercession & Judgement: Sodom & Gomorrah
21	25	Isaac - A Promise Fulfilled; Faithfulness Proven
26	30	Abrahamic Covenants: Second Generation - Jacob & Esau
31	36	Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau
37	41	Abrahamic Covenants: Third Generation - Jacob's Children
42	47	Joseph & Migration to Egypt
48	50	Israel in Egypt, Death of Jacob

Please refer to last two week's outline and lectures for more background. You can find these on our website: <https://unionumcnc.com>

2. Genesis 15 to 17 Overview

- **Genesis 15:1-5 Abram Becomes Righteous by Faith**

In these verses we see Abram feeling the effects of a long wait for God's promises to be fulfilled.

- **God's Renewed Covenant Promise**

15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."
NRSV

"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward" NIV

This happened after Abram rescued Lot, was blessed by Melchizedek, and gave tithes to Melchizedek, priest of the Most High

It was God's reaffirmation to Abram, promising him:

- **Fear Not** ("Do not be afraid")
- **Protection** ("I am your shield")
If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31
- **Reward for his obedience and faithfulness**
"your reward shall be very great" NRSV
"I am ... your very great reward" NIV

- **Abram's Impatience & Reaction**

Abram's reaction was, essentially, *'what's the point of more?'*

2 But Abram said, "**Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless** and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "**You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.**"

Is there something you are expecting from the Lord that is taking a long time to arrive? Answer to a specific prayer, perhaps? This is a natural human reaction to more

- **Covenant Promise of Genesis 13:14-17 Repeated**

15:4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but **a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.**" 5 **He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them."** Then he said to him, "**So shall your offspring be.**"
NIV

- **Abram Believed, and Became Righteous before God**

“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

15:6 NIV

Interesting points:

- Same promise about his offspring was made earlier (Gen 13:14-17).
Did Abram believe then?
- A great example of hearing God’s Word again and again to build faith
- We receive righteousness from God by faith

- **Genesis 15:10-21 “Cutting” The Covenant**

God “Cut” A Covenant with Abram

- **כָּרַת בְּרִית** Hebrew - cut covenant

- **Abram wanted a proof of covenant from God**

“I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.” 8But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” NRSV

- **The Lord obliged**

“Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

Note:

The signing of the covenant involved the shedding of blood

- **Abraham fought off what tried to steal his covenant**

11And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

What is trying to steal your blessings from God?

What are you doing about it?

- **Covenant signed by God with fire**

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

- **Genesis 15:12-20 Covenant Revelations & Promises**

New revelations in this covenant cutting ceremony

- **Promised longevity**

15 As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age

- **400 Year Vision -**

- **Israel's slavery in Egypt**

13 "Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there." NIV

- **The Exodus - God's Deliverance**

16 "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." NIV

- **Judgement : Reason for Possession of Canaan by Abram's Descendants**

"the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" 15:16 NIV

God is just, and judgement eventually comes.

- **Genesis 16: Ishmael, Product of Doubt & Impatience**

In this chapter, we see that Abram and Sarai get impatient after waiting for God's promised offspring for 10 years. They come up with their own solution with dire consequences.

- **16:1-3 Delayed Fulfilment; Doubt & Impatience, Human Compromise**
1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, 2 and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai

Abram seemed to have a natural peace-loving, compliant, and obedient disposition - he listened to and obeyed God. He also listened to his wife.

- **Sarai & Hagar: Family Problems in Covenant Land**
 - Hagar - an Egyptian slave girl under Sarai - was she brought over from Egypt when they returned after the famine?
 - Abram listened to Sarai and took Hagar as his wife - v2-4
 - Hagar conceived and started despising Sarai - v4
 - Sarai blamed Abram!
5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" NRSV
 - Abram chickened out!
6 "But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her." NRSV
- **Birth of Ishmael**
 - Hagar ran away but an angel of the Lord intervened and brought her back
 - Significant: Abram was 86 at birth of Ishmael - v16
 - Ishmael was born 11 Years after Abram's arrival in Canaan

- **Genesis 17: Covenant Renewed; Signs of Covenant**

- **Abram at 99, Covenant renewed, 13 Years after Ishmael**

1When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. 2And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." 3Then Abram fell on his face;

- Note emphasis on holiness
"walk before me, and be blameless"

- **Change of Names**

- **Abram to Abraham - Father/ancestor of multitude of nations - v5**
"I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations."
- Sarai to Sarah - v15-17 Mother of nations

- **Circumcision - Sign of Covenant**

10This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

- **Separate Covenant with Ismael**

18And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!"
20As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

- **Isaac to Inherit Abraham's Covenant**

21But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."

- **Instant Obedience**

23Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of

Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him.

26That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised;

- **Genesis 12-17 Abrahamic Covenants: Progressive Revelation**

- Genesis 12

12:33 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." NRSV

- This is a 7-part Covenant Promise

- I will make you a great nation
- I will bless you
- I will make your name great
- You will be a blessing
- I will bless those who bless you
- I will curse the one who curses you
- In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed

- Genesis 13

- 4The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. 17Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."

- Genesis 15

- "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward" NIV
- 15:4Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." 5He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." NIV

- Covenant cut with Abram. Revelations about the future - 400 year vision
- Genesis 17
 - Change of Name, Circumcision, Isaac Promised, Covenant with Ishmael, etc.

3. Daily Study Schedule & Questions

- **Day 1 & 2: Genesis 15:1-5 Abram Becomes Righteous by Faith**

As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on - see the cross-references in other scripture:

- How fear can prevent us from receiving God's best
- What does it mean to have God as our shield?
- What rewards do we get for obeying God and being faithful?
- How are we made righteous before God, and how do we see Abraham attaining this righteousness.
- Review July 31 2022 Sermon and Outline from our website on righteousness by faith in Christ. You'll find it at <https://unionumcnc.com>
What lessons can you draw from Abram's righteousness and how it relates to ours?

- **Day 2: Genesis 15:10-21 "Cutting" The Covenant**

Suggested reflection themes:

- The importance of a covenant
- How God responded to Abram's request for proof of covenant
- How God revealed more about the future to Abram because of His Covenant with Abram
- Homework: How does Holy Communion compare with the cutting of covenant with Abram in Genesis 15?

- **Day 3: Genesis 16: Ishmael, Product of Doubt & Impatience**

Suggested reflection themes:

- The dangers of coming up with our solutions to God's promises

- The difficulties brought about by a lack of faith and impatience
 - God's intervention even when we do fail to be faithful - how Hagar was helped by an angel
 - How we relate to those over us - Hagar's reaction to Sarai
 - How we relate to those we have authority over - Sarah and Hagar
 - Should Abram have been firmer with Sarai? How?
- **Day 4& 5: Genesis 17: Covenant Renewed; Signs of Covenant**
Suggested reflection themes:
 - God's faithfulness to Abram
 - Change of Name - the importance of names
 - Signs of covenant and their importance.
 - Homework: Read Acts 15. Is circumcision obligatory for us today?
 - The importance of faithfulness and obedience
 - The fulfilment of God's promises.