

Bible Overview: 2 The God of the Covenant

God establishes his 'Covenant with Abraham'

Gen 12:1-3

Gen 15:1-21

Gen 17:1-22

What is a covenant?

"Think of it as a marriage bond between God and his people...he is redeeming a people for himself, a promise most gloriously expressed throughout Scripture by the formula, "I will be your God and you will be my people"... a covenant is a 'binding personal relationship'. (Back to Basics David Hagopian)

A covenant between God and man has conditions/stipulations and promises of union and communion. It would often be inaugurated by a ceremony in which one or both parties would express their commitment to the other.

Marriage as covenant.

There are a number of 'covenants' in the Bible:

- Adam – Hosea 6:7
- Noah – Genesis 9
- Abraham
- Moses
- David
- Jesus

SOME CLUES TO SPOT 'COVENANT THINKING' IN THE BIBLE:

- 'I will be your God, you will be my people'
- The word translated 'steadfast love', 'unfailing love' his love that endures', 'everlasting love', 'great love', or just sometimes 'love' – Hebrew word = 'hesed' (eg Psalm 48:9, 51:1, 52:8)
- 'Lord' when it is spelt LORD = 'Yahweh' See Psalm 110:1

Gen 12:1-3 God promises:

- Abraham will be a great nation
- His name will be great
- God will bless Abraham and he will be a blessing to all nations

Note God's commitment to world mission:

Gen 17:1-22 God promises:

- The covenant will be everlasting (v7)
- The land of Canaan (v8)
- Abraham will be the father of many nations (v4-6)
- Circumcision is to be the sign of the covenant (v11)

Call to Abraham has a double promise:

- To bless Abraham
- To make Abraham a blessing

Blessing = the pronouncement of God's favour

Opposite = Curse.

Blazing Torch Genesis 15

- i- Abraham seeks reassurance of God's promises v2,8
- ii- Abraham is justified by faith v6
- iii- The ceremony of the blazing torch

Meaning and Significance:

Jeremiah 34:18-19 "Those who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces" (an example of a covenant ceremony and commitment)

Its significance?

- Who makes the promise?
- Who fulfils it?

What role does Abraham play in this?

Is the covenant God makes here 'conditional' or 'unconditional'?

What does it 'cost' God to be faithful to his covenant promises?

When else in the Bible do we read of darkness falling (v17) Galatians 3:13-14

Who are the countless descendants of Abraham? Read Galatians 3:6-9

READ Revelation 7:9

IN GROUPS – DISCUSS 'HOMEWORK' PASSAGE GENESIS 22

- Why do you think this chapter is in the Bible?
- Do you think God is cruel/sadistic to Abraham/Isaac?
- If our sinful natures have 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie' how might this incident appear to provide ammunition for such a view
- From what we have seen at the beginning of this week – how might we begin to understand what this chapter is about?

Story of Joseph:

- Faithful through innocent suffering
- Constant descent – divine vindication (Phil2:5-11)
- Key verse Gen 50:20 Joseph's suffering brought salvation to many
- Jacob's blessing of sons: Which is most significant – who might we expect?
- Gen 49:8-12, Rev 5:1-6

FOR NEXT TIME:

- Read Exodus 34:6-7 – What is strange about these verses? (see also Proverbs 17:15)
- Read Romans 3:25-26 What does the cross demonstrate/show? Why does it need showing? How does it show it?
- Read 1 John 4:7-12 What does the cross demonstrate/show? How?