



## God's Promises to Abraham

READINGS FOR THIS LESSON:- Genesis 13; Galatians 3.

About 2,000 years before Jesus was born, there lived a man named Abraham, who is spoken of in the Bible as "the friend of God" (James 2:23).

He lived in the town of Ur, which was in the land we now call Iraq, about 1,300 kilometres to the east of the land of Israel.

The people of Ur knew nothing of the true God. They worshipped many false gods, chief of which was the moon. The ruins of a temple built to this moon-god have been found there.

### A message from God

One day Abram (whose name was later changed by God to "Abraham") received a message from God. We can read this message in Genesis 12:1,



*"The LORD had said to Abram, Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."*

I wonder how we would feel if we received such a message? Travelling was much more difficult and far more dangerous in those days.

When He told Abraham to do this, God also promised him,

*"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"* (Genesis 12:2-3).

Abraham believed the promises that God had made, and he obeyed Him. The Apostle Paul tells us that Abraham,

*"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going"* (Hebrews 11:8).

After some time he reached the land of Israel with his wife Sarai (her name also was later changed by God to "Sarah"), and his nephew, Lot. Now carefully read Genesis 13 again. You will read how Lot chose the best of the land and Abraham was left to find food for his flocks and herds in the dry part of the country. But God was with Abraham, and gave another promise to him,

*"All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted."* (Genesis 13:15-16).

### A wonderful promise

Did you notice that this time God promised Abraham the land **forever**? To own the land forever, Abraham would have to live forever, so God was really promising him eternal life.

As well as this, God gave the promise to Abraham's seed, or son. At that time Abraham and Sarah had no children. God promised him an offspring, or son, who would share the land with him. He also promised that Abraham's descendants, or family, would become a great nation.

## God makes a covenant with Abraham

Please turn to Genesis 15, and here you will find that God repeats His promises to Abraham - but He adds more details.

Time had gone by and Abraham was getting old and the promised son had not been given. But once more God promised him that he should have a son, and that his descendants should be as great in number as the stars in the sky. In verse 6 we read,

*"Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness"*

Abraham like us was not free from sin, but he trusted in God and because of this God was pleased with him. This time we are told that God made a covenant with Abraham – a covenant is a special promise that can never be changed. You will read how this covenant was made in Genesis 15:7-18. In the time of Abraham a covenant was made by killing an animal.

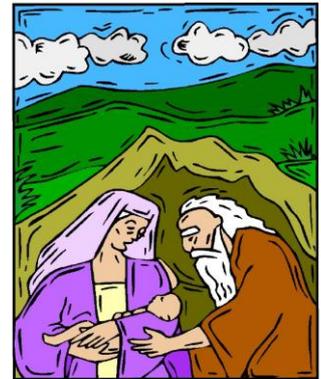
Then the dead animal was divided, and the two people who were making the covenant walked between the pieces. But with this covenant, God Himself did not walk between the pieces, but Abraham saw a burning lamp pass between them. The covenant was sure and certain!

## The promised child

Abraham was 100 years old and his wife 90, when at last God fulfilled His promise and gave them a son whom they called Isaac. In Genesis 22 you will find a wonderful example of Abraham's trust in God. Read the first 14 verses.

God told Abraham to offer up his only son Isaac as a sacrifice, but God had promised that through Isaac, Abraham's descendants should become a great nation.

What did Abraham do? He knew that God would keep His promises, and so Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:17-19,



*"By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death"*

Abraham was prepared even to offer up his only son, knowing that God would bring him back to life. No wonder God was pleased with his trust and obedience. You can read in Genesis 22:15-18 of more promises that God made to him.

## A greater son than Isaac

These things happened nearly 4,000 years ago, and at first they don't mean very much to us.

But Abraham had a son who was greater than Isaac. In the first verse of the New Testament (Matthew 1:1) we read,

*"Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham"*

Jesus also was the promised son of Abraham. Paul tells us this in Galatians 3:16,

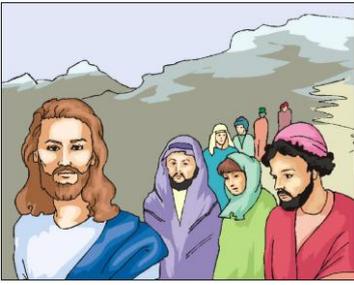
*"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ"*

So the promises made to Abraham that he should live forever in the land of Israel and be a blessing to all nations, were also promises made to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus comes again to rule from Jerusalem, we shall see these promises fulfilled.

## **We can share the promises as well**

If we believe on Jesus Christ and do what he asks us, we can also share these promises.



For if we belong to Christ we are also Abraham's children. We read in Galatians 3:29,

*"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"*

Then we, can also share the promises. We can have eternal life and help Jesus Christ in the great work of bringing happiness to people on the earth.

Now you will remember that one of the promises was,

*"...through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*  
(Genesis 22:18).

Paul writes in Galatians 3:8 that,

*"The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'"*

This promise will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns to the earth and sets up the Kingdom of God.

## **What will happen to Abraham?**

But, you may be thinking, "What will happen to Abraham? He never received the promises, and yet he is dead".

Yes this is true. But God's promises cannot fail. When Jesus Christ comes again, he will raise Abraham and Isaac from the dead - and many others besides them. *So Jesus said,*

*"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me"* (John 8:28).

They will live forever upon this earth, enjoying those blessings, which God had promised them such a very long time ago.

*"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Daniel 12:2).

## **Summary**

1. Abraham was called by God to leave Ur and go to an unknown country.
2. This country was the land of Israel, and God promised that Abraham should own it forever.
3. He also promised that Abraham should have a son and that his descendants would become a great nation and that his son would be a blessing to all nations.
4. Abraham had a son, Isaac, born miraculously when his parents were very old. Jesus Christ is also a son or descendant of Abraham, and he, also, was born miraculously - of a virgin.
5. If we belong to Christ, we are counted as children of Abraham, and can share the promises made to him.
6. These promises will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ comes back and sets up the Kingdom of God on the earth.

## **A suggestion**

All this information about the seed of Abraham may be difficult to understand the first time. But it is very important. We suggest that you read this section through once again – now!