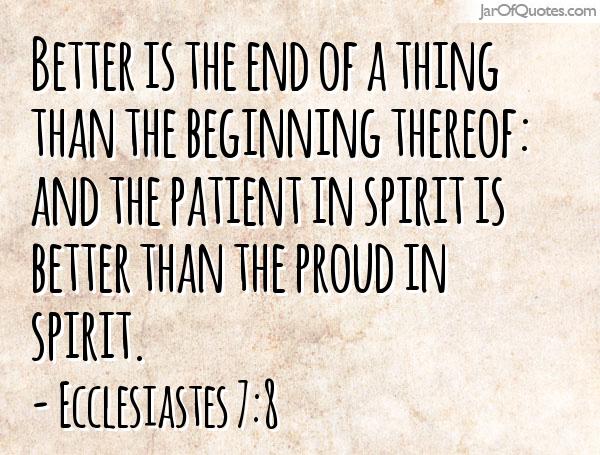
**A Study of Genesis through Covenant Eyes**

LESSON 1 passages are read by Max Mclean at <https://www.biblegateway.com/audio/mclean/esv/Gen>

1. **Overview**

Creation & Call 1,2 How important is the start of all things? (4 fundamental questions every human ought face)

How potent is God's Word? ("God's powerful, authoritative, self expression" Frame)

Imago Dei--Does is really matter? (Unique hybrids in creation)

Now that we are here--what are we to do? (Cultural Mandate: 1:28-31; children/land/wealth)

What is the Covenant God made with man? (**Adamic Covenant**: 2: 15-17)

1. **Read Genesis 1 & 2** (5:01; 3:44)
2. **Discuss**
3. How important is the start of all things? (4 fundamental questions every human ought face)

Judaism (post-Christ)

Elohim

to

whatever glorifies Adonai

to

worship God through duty

to

God (who rewards those who do good)

(hell)

Christianity

Imago Dei

to

whatever glorifies God

to

enjoy God

to

glory

\*note simplicity ~ A concept in science & philosophy that usually hints to the verifiable….

Humanism

Evolutionary mech.

to

whatever benefits me/man

to

worship self

to

wherever or whatever I believe

(hell)

Animism

Nature

to

whatever benefits nature

to

worship creation

to

being reabsorbed into nature or ancestors

(hell)

1. Origin: Where did I come from?
2. Morality: What is right and wrong?

Let's see how important ORIGINS are:

1. Teleology: Why am I here?
2. Destiny: Where am I headed?
3. Ecclesiastes 7:8
4. How potent is God's Word? ("God's powerful, authoritative, self expression" Frame)
5. God's word creates
6. God's word carries authority
7. God's word is His presence (ref. kids art around house)
8. Imago Dei--Does is really matter? (Unique hybrids in creation)

1. We alone are made in God's Image: not that we have it in us…we "are" His Image.

2. Hybrid uniqueness: everything else: spiritual or physical

a. cat/rock/tree: physical (Btw: contra mystical religions)

b. angels/Father/Holy Spirit: spiritual

c. Humans: physical & spiritual (Jesus--a most unique hybrid if you will, Godman)

It's shocking how silent Judaism is on the afterlife--in contrast to all religions (Pagan; Islam, Christianity)

1. I cannot think of a more central and pervasive principle when dealing with ethics:
   1. Why is abortion wrong?
   2. Why is murder wrong?
   3. Why is suicide wrong?
   4. Why is Euthanasia wrong?
   5. Why is slandering each other wrong? (cf. III. B. 2. Above); words carry authority--this is why we name animals, cars, kids…and enemies.
   6. Why is abuse wrong?
   7. Why are exercise and fashion good?
2. Imago Dei: what does it mean?
   1. Though not Him--we are like Him (lit. "*likeness*"
      1. Omnipresent (everywhere at once) 🡪 real presence
      2. Omnipotent (all-powerful) 🡪 power/reasonable will to do things
      3. Omniscient (all-knowing) 🡪 knowledge (truth can be understood and handled within rules; needs a source)
   2. We can mirror Him by living out His will--reflections of God to bring bout our purposes of glorifying God & enjoying Him
      1. Art/music ii. Athletics iii. Argument iv. Literary works v. Landscaping vi. Making a bed/washing dishes/folding laundry
3. Now that we are here--what are we to do? (Cultural Mandate: 1:28-31; children/land/wealth)
4. Notice the pattern of being fruitful (a growing and fertile bounty), multiplying (having kids), and subduing (ruling land and creatures)
   1. Mirrors OT pattern: blessing = kids/wealth/land
   2. Implies a struggle to come (God providentially making man capable of purpose after the Fall)
   3. Gives everyday purpose and everyone meaning--whether you are rich, poor, strong, weak, male, female, young, old….believer or unbeliever
   4. Sets up standard for God to uphold for all mankind…
5. What is the Covenant God made with man? (**Adamic Covenant**: 2: 15-17)
6. What was God's command to Adam? (notice how he singles Adam out: smells thickly of Federal headship -- a doctrine to come next class)
7. What were the consequences of obedience?
8. What were the consequences of disobedience?
   1. Did they have a context for death?
   2. What, then, did this demand of them?
   3. Is this any different for us today?

LESSONS 2 & 3

* + 1. **Overview**

Fall & Promise 3 Where did sin come from? (nature of sin; contrast Father Gabriel's words with Christ's words)

What happened when we sinned? (Finding cover; The four divorces)

Wait--was I with Adam, so why am I being punished? (Federal Headship vs. realism)

To whom was the first proclamation of the Gospel given? (The Promise veiled)

1. **Read Genesis 3** (4:13)
2. **Discuss**
   * 1. Where did sin come from? (nature of sin; contrast Father Gabriel's words with Christ's words)
        1. Origin was Satan (this is partly why heaven is greater than the Garden…)
        2. What was the sin…Looking? Tasting? Was it the fruit?
        3. "People are basically good" or "The world and its devilish influences are evil"
           1. 3 players: WORLD/FLESH/DEVIL…which seems to be the one with whom we wrestle the most?
           2. Original Sin

NOT: the first sin itself--but rather its RESULT

A violation of God's decree (Decretive Word)

WC 6.2-4 elegantly explains why we are born in sin:

2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. 3. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was **imputed**; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. 4. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions

"reckoned to one's account" as theirs:

Eg. being pulled over because of shenanigans in the backseat

We are not sinners because we sin--we sin because we are sinners. David understood:

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Objections? Adam was our BEST representative (consider for a moment--we are blind to our sin, he was perfect and still…)

* + - 1. Confusion over when is sin sin?

WD: Season 7 Ep. 7 Spencer asks Gabriel if hating someone is a sin, and it’s not since it’s a thought.

The Walking Dead: common misconception...

Contrast this with Jesus' words

Matt 5: 21ff 21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother[c] will be liable to judgment"

 Matt 5: 27,28 27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matt 15: 16-19 16 And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?[d] 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool[c] of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”[d] 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

* + 1. What happened when we sinned?
       1. Finding cover: what did man do before God even met them in the Garden after they had sinned? (cf. 3:7…)
          1. Man's default (works righteousness/seeks to save self/cover own shame)
          2. Woeful inadequacy
          3. God's plan foreshadowed: 3:21…brief--but significant!

(The four divorces)

* + - 1. Man vs. God
      2. Man vs. Self
      3. Man vs. Man
      4. Man vs. Nature
    1. Wait--was I with Adam, so why am I being punished? Two Augustinian views
       1. Realism: (held personally by Augustine) because of Adam being the first human and the biological head of the human race, and in a very real sense all humans are in Adam--naturally; (backed by writer of Hebrews where he says Levi was in the loins of Abe)
       2. Federal Headship: (held by me personally) the closeness between Adam and all subsequent humanity is covenantal. Adam is the covenant head of a covenant of creation that God had with all humanity. And so, as covenant head, Adam represents us all, and so his actions--even sin; (backed by Paul's argument in Romans where just as Adam's sin is imputed to us, so Christ's righteeousness is imputed to Hos covenant children)
    2. To whom was the first proclamation of the Gospel given? (The Promise veiled)

1. Nature of the curses:
   1. Starts with Satan; reserves most for Adam
   2. Hits each in the teleological jugular (makes it such that the pain will center on where they would find their identity)

Satan: plan to thwart God (more on this soon)

Eve: sinking your life into your children will be painful

Adam: your work/career will be toilsome and be a challenge to make fruitful

1. The Gospel given (the "*protoevangelion*"): Genesis 3:15

(identify all pronouns and nouns here to make sense of this…

I will put enmity between you and the woman,

and between your offspring[e] and her offspring;

he shall bruise your head,

and you shall bruise his heel.”

* + 1. A harsh end--or was it?
       1. How is this event usually understood or depicted?
       2. How, though terribly, terribly sad, is this an act of severe mercy on God's part?
    2. Read Eric Phillips' "White Book Black Book".

LESSON 4

* + - 1. **Overview**

Sin is Crouching 4 How do we know Adam & Eve were saved? (obedience & belief; sacrificial system in full swing)

What did Adam & Eve believe about their children--the importance of a holy line?

(From Promise to Holy War)

Why did God preserve Cain? & how it was not done!)

Why do evil men "flourish?" (God sends rain on the righteous & unrighteous)

Can man make evil more evil? (the Ancient bravado of Lamech; when men go down with fists vs. God)

1. **Read Genesis 4** (3:56)
2. **Discuss**
3. How do we know Adam & Eve were saved? (obedience & belief; sacrificial system in full swing)
   * + 1. What was the Promise? What needed to happen to fulfill it? (read ch 3 opening)
       2. How does anyone know we embrace Christ?
          1. In a word? What did Christ say to the disciples?

John 13:35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

* + - * 1. What does this look like? Consider what john--the one who wrote the previous verse penned to the Church:

I John 3: 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

I John 5:1,2 1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

In a word: Obedience! Adam & Eve were commanded to be fruitful and raise up the Promised one…

1. What did Adam & Eve believe about their children--the importance of a holy line? (From Promise to Holy War)
2. Evidently a rudimentary sacrificial system was communicated to Adam & Eve
3. This, too, was passed down to Cain & Abel
4. At its core: God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice & displeased with Cain's
   1. Rather than being preoccupied with the possible inadequacy of vegetables--the heart of sacrifice is found where?
   2. Centrality of Motives:
      1. Sacrifice: Matt 5:24 (leaving gift before the altar & reconciling with your brother)
      2. Sin: Matt 5:22 (anger at brother is the sin from which the action of murder flows)
      3. Hope: Hebrews 11:19 (Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again)
   3. The "proof will be in the pudding" (Cain's disbelief in the Promise will emerge through his actions--eventually)
5. God offers a great show of mercy--what does He do? (Have you ever felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit just as sin was crouching at the door?)
   1. Warned Cain (good fathers do this as opposed to disciplining out of nowhere)
   2. Offered an opportunity for a repentant conversation. ("Where is your brother Abel?")
   3. Curse--reiterates the Adamic curse (consistency, while injurious, is merciful)
6. Mosaic Moment: Moses is setting up a motif for Israel: Abel (Nomadic Shepherd) vs. Cain (Settled Agriculture)

Dr. Richard Pratt:

"As this passage indicates, Cain was a settled agriculturalist, a farmer, while Abel was a shepherd. In ancient and modern times, it has been common for tensions to arise between settled, agriculturally-based societies and nomadic shepherds. And as the book of Genesis itself indicates, Moses and the Israelites were quite aware of this kind of tension and how it led to serious trials while they were in Egypt. In Genesis 46:33-34, Joseph instructed his brothers in this way when they came to Egypt:

When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, "What is your occupation?" you should answer, "Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did." Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians (Genesis 46:33-34).

1. Why did God preserve Cain? & how it was not done!)
   1. Continuation of the Holy War and endurance of the Promise (see turning point at end of ch. 4: 25,26)
   2. Mark was not, as some have speculated, making Cain black--why unbiblical?
2. Why do evil men "flourish?" (God sends rain on the righteous & unrighteous)
   1. Still Image-Bearers (tarnished but not lost)
   2. Common grace (the grace of God by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation); eg. Having kids, being born into family, enjoying food, enjoying general revelation…
   3. All are God's "Natural Children"
3. Can man make evil more evil? (the Ancient bravado of Lamech; when men go down with fists vs. God)
   1. Notice what Cain did: built a city (contra what?) and named it after? (contra what?)--double violation of cultural mandate.
   2. What can make an already abhorrent sin worse?--bragging about it.
   3. Lamech uses 2 devices here that pervert God's established economy:
      1. Song (originally meant to praise the Creator-and agree with His reality)
      2. Hyperbole: heralds pride above that of Cain and bypasses God's declaration and self-declares his own protection.

LESSON 5

1. **Overview**

Dirge of Death 5 How has disobedience worked out? What seems to be the consequence of the Fall?

How long did they live? What could be accomplished in a lifetime?

Is Holy War still waging? Does the Promise still stand? Does anyone believe it? (A sliver of hope in the

1. **Read Genesis 5** (3:18) darkness; tracing the lineages)
2. **Discuss**
3. How has disobedience worked out? What seems to be the consequence of the Fall?
   1. As we read chapter 5, what was burned onto our memories? Death.
   2. What is the covenant tone? Obedience = Life; Disobedience = Death (merciful consistency once again)
4. How long did they live? What could be accomplished in a lifetime?
   1. Look at Adam: 930 years. Say he was born during the Norman Conquest (1066 AD- Many historians view 1066 as the start of Medieval England). Adam would have lived until 1996 AD (Princess Diana and Prince Charles were officially divorced during August of 1996).
      1. This is over 1 million meals consumed
      2. 2.4 million hours sleeping (that's 271 years…at an average of 7hrs /night)
      3. According to one study, we consume roughly 6 lbs of dirt in a lifetime[[1]](#footnote-1); by this figure, Adam would have consumed 77.5 lbs.)
      4. To remain healthy, he should have consumed 679,000 litres of water (the approx. volume of an Olympic sized pool)
      5. Kids? Scripture names 3 and mentions others (sons & daughters); according to Josephus/Jewish tradition, Adam had 56 (33 sons and 23 daughters[[2]](#footnote-2); endnote 8); one commenter said more than 7, less than 1011--assuming 1 / 9 mos, no rest between & twins every 86th birth!)
   2. Enoch--why 365…seems so short? (He was blessed in particular contrast to his son Methuselah because living in the presence of God is a greater privilege than even life here on earth!)
5. Is Holy War still waging? Does the Promise still stand? Does anyone believe it? (A sliver of hope in the darkness; tracing the lineages)
   1. Chapter 5, while dirge-like, is a hopeful contrast to the latter part of chapter 4 (Seth's lineage vs. Cain's--Following examples of their forefathers (Sethite Lamech: sought comfort in Redeemer & Promise vs. Cainite Lamech--sought comfort in bloody revenge)
   2. What could Adam & Eve have believed about their children in regards to the Promise?
      1. Cain-firstborn (a motif of offering to the Lord; cf. Abel's 4:4)
      2. Abel-worships God as God intended
      3. What to do next? Have another son: Covenant lineage starts here early in ch 5; Who thought their son was the Promise? (Adam & Eve…why….God told them so…**belief**!)

LESSON 6

1. **Overview**

Covenant of Preservation 6 What is the fastest natural way to corrupt humanity?--forget the Covenant

Who were these "sons of God" & "daughters of men"?

All that glitters is not gold. What if I find her attractive? (an ancient motif for marrying within the faith)

We are down to 8 people--where does the Promise now stand?

The Noahic Covenant

1. **Read Genesis 6** (3:06)
2. **Discuss**
3. What is the fastest natural way to corrupt humanity?--forget the Covenant
   1. Parents--particularly fathers, bear a weighty responsibility: the spiritual nurturing of their children.
   2. The covenant must be passed on (the strongest case for Christian school)
   3. The best way to ensure this? Marry a believer.
4. Who were these "sons of God" & "daughters of men"?
   1. Three interpretations:
      1. Sethites who intermarried Cainites (traditional Christian interp; in line with Moses' current context as it is a covenant no-no)
      2. Angels who married humans (proposed by early Jewish tradition; linguistically possible, but contradicts Jesus' words that angels do not marry (Mk 12:25)--hence contra orthodox doctrine)
      3. Tyrannical successors to Lamech (proposed by rabbis in 2nd cent; lacks ancient support and demands godless actions for those with such a title)
5. All that glitters is not gold.
   1. What if I find her attractive? (an ancient motif for marrying within the faith)
      1. The language here is parallel with the sin in the garden (this denotes actions of grave consequence)
         1. Saw that they were attractive
         2. Took...any they chose
      2. The hand that rocks the cradle…rules the world…(poem by William Ross Wallace)
   2. Every intention of their heart was evil (depravity unbridled)
   3. Contrast: Noah (no wonder--he followed God's pattern; how do we know?--immediate response to God's commands)
6. We are down to 8 people--where does the Promise now stand?
   1. The Noahic Covenant
      1. God finds Noah blameless (not sinless but one who does not challenge God and devotion to his Words)
      2. God grants Noah grace unconditionally rather than anything based on his moral behavior (it's natural--or better yet, spiritually coherent that God's favor and obedience would meet in this way as God's grace bestows the ability to obey!)
      3. Verse 13: While pronouncing judgement, it also serves which purpose? (warn Noah the effects of disobedience)
      4. Note the covenantal language:
         1. Obedience (making the ark, v. 22) = life
         2. Disobedience (ignoring God's Promises)= death
         3. Note: here the Hebrew term "covenant" (berit) is used for the first time; a bond in blood sovereignly administered

LESSON 7

1. **Overview**

Violence meets violence 7, 8 Why the uneven number of animals…I thought two by two was the rule?

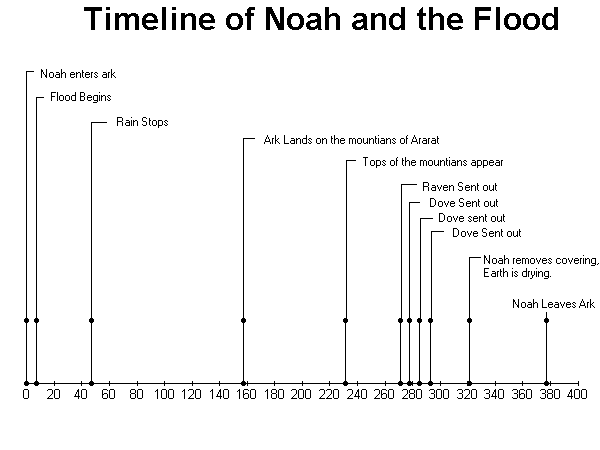
Where did all that rain come from?

How long were they in the Ark? (waiting for the rain; waiting for the land)

All that glitters is not gold. What if I find her attractive? (an ancient motif for marrying within the faith)

Of what use is doing all this work--what if this happens again?

**Read Genesis 7&8** (3:08; 3:13)

1. **Discuss**
2. Why the uneven number of animals…I thought two by two was the rule?
3. Note the specifications:
   1. 7 pairs (clean)
   2. 1 pair (unclean)…why?
4. God was even preserving their ability to worship appropriately despite the unprecedented stress on getting the proper sacrifice (see the grace motif in action?)
5. Where did all that rain come from?
   * + 1. Above & below
          1. Rain fell for the first time (vapor barrier theory)
          2. The "fountains of the great deep burst forth" v.11 (expanding earth theory)
6. How long?: building & waiting
   1. How long did it take to build it? (120 years; 1/8th of his life)
      1. Expert = 10,000 hours
      2. Noah spent approx. at least 350,400 hrs on building ark if 8 hrs./day--and no rain delays!
      3. Size (modern day battleship; 450x75x45 ft)
   2. waiting for rain (a week)--btw, who closed the door?
   3. waiting for land (over a year)
7. What did they do on the Ark--sounds like one of my family driving vacations?
   1. Having pets gives us an, albeit miniscule, appreciation for God's self-given responsibility of sustaining all creatures.
   2. Infuses dignity into the most menial tasks as obedience in this preserved all life.
   3. No mention of those wishing to come along nor any who wished to defect (Flies in face of most recent Hollywood movie)
      1. God did not reveal Covenant of Preservation with them (the Noahic phase)
      2. How is this just?
         1. God is Sovereign
         2. God is good
         3. God *had* revealed His Promise to all mankind--man simply rejected it wholesale-except for Noah…
         4. Review of the Covenant

1. Of what use is doing all this work--what if this happens again?
   1. Doesn't all this destruction take some of the wind out of one's vocational sails?
   2. Greeks had a Cosmic notion called the Great Year that would bring the destruction of the Universe and the celestial dance would then begin again (this gives understanding, then, as to why we have the Greeks to thank for Western Philosophy--but not modern science; Modern science was birthed and nurtured by the Christian worldview which suggested the contrary notions of longevity (Noahic Promise), predictability (foundation of scientific method), and (good) ontology (creation is separate from God, therefore hands-on curiosity is welcome).
   3. How did God provide reassurance that it was worthwhile for Noah and his sons to labor again?
      1. Vv. 20-22: God promises:
         1. Never to curse the Earth again and destroy all flesh (contra Greek notion)
         2. Man need not live in fear next time it rains
         3. Seasons remain and the work of man's hands (agriculture/herding/metallurgy/art/culinary, etc.) remains

LESSON 8

1. **Overview**

Violence meets Justice 9 Wait, haven’t we heard this before? (reiteration of cultural mandate)

Isn't capital punishment murder? (How valuable am I?)

How do I know God's covenant with Noah applies to us today? (the sign)

Has God won the Holy War? (God: 8, Satan: 0…oh, wait)

1. **Read Genesis 9** (3:54)
2. **Discuss**

Wait, haven’t we heard this before? (reiteration of cultural mandate)

The structure of Good Parenting

Reminds child of Covenant love (He won't 'unchild' us when we disobey)

Gives us a purpose/goal to aim for (still the same as it was)

Gives hope for awaited Promised One (we can remind our kids of Christ's love)

Expanded

Safety:

HUMAN: animals would no longer come into camp & wreak havoc in the same way (eg. dinosaurs)

ANIMALS: humans could no longer pick off animals at will--the animals hid/fled/needed an extra degree of domestication, if you will

Menu: a provision for consuming meat is given

May have been an expansion to what sinful man was already doing

Some argue (Calvin among them) that meat was already permissible, but significantly and surprisingly, there is no distinction drawn between clean and unclean meat here (a situation addressed and restored by the Christian Church in Acts under the New Covenant)

Human dignity reiterated (see next point)

Isn't capital punishment murder? (How valuable am I?)

How can one know the value of a thing? (see what it costs--seems reasonable--at the risk of sounding silly)

How can I know the value of me? (see what I cost)

Pre-Messiah: What is your price-tag? (the only thing commensurate with your value: another human being, the most valuable aspect of creation as a physical reality on the planet)

Post-Messiah: What is the believer's price tag? Infinite worth--as God gives His Highest & Best for you: Jesus, His One and Only Son)

How do I know God's covenant with Noah applies to us today? (the sign)

Another great parenting strategy: visual reminder (school sports championship banners; "here I raise my *Ebenezer*"--OT visual; Jacob & Lot pile up stones to signify for generations to come the vows made)

Confidence that what God said in vv. 20-22 of ch 8 still stand--when will the sign appear?--whenever it is needed, that is, incidentally, whenever it rains. (Funny how science seeks to explain it away--naturally, but they forget that God designed water droplets to diffract light in that way; C.S Lewis' notion of "beyond nature")

God is still the same yesterday, today, & tomorrow (immutability).

Has God won the Holy War? (God: 8, Satan: 0…oh, wait)

As it stands, things seem to be unfairly one-sided--all believe in the covenant, right?

Strange Providence: a son's disregard for the covenant

What happened?

Did a son see his father's nakedness and so fall under a harsher curse?

Did his mockery of his father warrant so harsh a punishment?

Disrespect of a God-given authority is a serious thing--but the language here suggests something far worse in its violation of God's family authority: homosexual crime.

Before we simply turn towards Ham in disgust--how could this have been prevented?

Noah's obedience in choosing to remain sober!

Here's where the Father's sins give an outlet for the children to test their faith--and prove their allegiance.

We are also given a stark and unavoidable peek into the destruction that drunkenness can bring (recall life is an issue of control--submission to the Spirit or the flesh (cf. Proverbs speaks of a prostitute reducing a man to a loaf of bread; we are told by Paul to walk according to the Spirit so that we do not gratify the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16 ff)

Noah awakes--and who is cursed? Canaan. What?

Quickest way to a parent's heart is through their children.

Offers a strange mercy to Ham himself (as God already blessed him--yet the punishment carries a particularly enduring tone as Ham's legacy will not escape God's wrath.

These descendant become the Canaanites--the most dreaded enemies of the Israelites

These include the Egyptians, Philistines, Assyrians, and Babylonians (all known for polytheistic paganism and the most vile practices of sex worship and infant sacrifice.

By the way--what is Moses doing here?

* + - * 1. Providing a scouting report
        2. Rallying Israel to a righteous fervor against the enemies of God's law.
        3. Warning the men of how a seemingly small indiscretion can change the course of a family's history.

The curse does not stop there--more is given tucked away in the blessing of Shem & Japheth.

1. God Blesses Himself--but declares Shem as the one who will keep the covenant.

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem;

and let Canaan be his servant.

May God enlarge Japheth,[d]

1. God presents Japheth as a guest/outsider who will eventually be drawn to Shem/Shem's God
2. Fulfillment? (NT inclusion of Gentiles into the Covenant in Acts as they are grafted in!)

and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,

and let Canaan be his servant.”

1. Canaan and his descendants are now relegated to serving God according to His sovereign plan.

**The genealogy began in 5:32 is now completed in vv. 28 & 29 in the same pattern as ch 5**

LESSON 9

1. **Overview**

British Parliament & 10, 11 Wait, how can the Tower of Babel happen (ch 11) if everyone migrated in chapter 10?

The Table of Nations Can't we skip all these names? (The value of ch 10: history; identity; present purpose)

Checking in with the Covenant: How are we doing? (tower of babel)

Is it over? Has Satan won the Holy War? (God: ?, Satan: everyone)

Is God still on the throne? ('came down'; the brilliance of Moses' writing style)

1. **Read Genesis 10,11** (3:18; 3:40)
2. **Discuss**
3. Wait, how can the Tower of Babel happen (ch 11) if everyone migrated in chapter 10?
4. Chapter 11 is an "inset" or magnified flashback to the greater, overarching narrative of ch 10.
5. Moses' method is similar to what he did with chapters 1&2 where 2 is not a separate act--but rather a closeup of the events of ch 1's sixth day.
6. Can't we skip all these names? (The value of ch 10: history; identity; present purpose)
7. Historicity: Ch 10 is called the Table of Nations and it stands out as one of the only--and most detailed of ancient sources on the primeval movement of humanity from its birthplace.
8. Identity: At this point in Moses' day, Israel feels like an orphan because it has been enslaved for generations. This provides a concrete understanding of who they are in God's sight and where they came from through the Covenant Promise experienced by their forefathers.
9. Purpose: Sets up a context from which the Israelites now know their enemies and why they are wandering to a promise land in the first place (Pep rally again).
10. Checking in with the Covenant: How are we doing? (tower of babel)
11. Weird story…why included? 🡪 provide an explanation for cultures….basis for all languages…then foods, traditions….(profound actually)
    1. Isn't focusing on a project a good thing?...such a sense of purpose….good, no?
    2. Problem: not mere focusing--but rather focusing on violating the Cultural Mandate in every way possible!
       1. Came to one place (vs. spreading out); v. 4 "lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth"
       2. To make a name for themselves (vs. name for God) v. 4 "let us make a name for ourselves"
12. Is it over? Has Satan won the Holy War? (God: ?, Satan: everyone)
    1. Seems like everyone is in agreement here…making covenants with themselves with language that eerily parallels the monolithic tone of the "every intent was evil" in Noah's day.
    2. Satan may have rejoiced a bit--but God emerges and through one act (not sure to call it simple), forces adherence to one aspect of the Cultural Mandate: spread out; seems to parallel which merciful act by God? (expulsion form the Garden)
    3. God, partly, is protecting man from himself.
13. Is God still on the throne? ('came down'; the brilliance of Moses' writing style)
    1. This is where Moses uses s phrase that we should find both humorous and electrifying: 7Come, let us go down

Consider the plurality: echoes of the Creation of Man (obviously the Trinity is in mind here)

Consider Moses' use of the word "down!" (literally man's highest achievement was not enough to reach Him!)

a) Contra salvation by works (not here by accident)

b) God still condescended to love man despite our best efforts to dethrone Him

(another eerie parallel to Satan's traditional fall)

* 1. Moses' writing structure
     1. He introduces larger narratives then follows with detail.
        + 1. Gen1 (7 days) & Gen 2 (partial day)
          2. Gen 1-10 (Thousands of years; humanity's beginning) 🡪 Gen 11-50 (hundreds of years; patriarchal stories)
          3. Scripture (Genesis is foundational context) 🡪 Rest of Scripture/History)--this is why Satan approves so heartily of an evolutionary model--it strips History, human dignity, true religious practice, and good science of its context!)

LESSON 10

1. **Overview**

Call of the Ur-bane 12 Wait, Nahor married whom? (ch 11 end; genetic strength; law yet to come)

Making sense of the context of barrenness (puzzles scholars—befits the covenant!)

Was Abram a believer? (Called out of Ur--a land of ziggurats and covenants)

Sound check: first mention of the Abramic Promise

Abram’s lot: a vested interest? (foreshadowing concern; tells us a bit about Abe)

Fleeing to Egypt: the original escape? (circumstances that move us)

Ladies, how would you feel? (saving his skin—Sarai as human shield)

A Lesson from a Pagan (ever been chided by an unbeliever?)

1. **Read Genesis 12** (3:02)
2. **Discuss**

A. Wait, Nahor married whom? (ch 11 end; genetic strength; law yet to come)

1. Milcah was Haran’s daughter & Lot’s sister.

2. Civil: There were no laws in place forbidding marriage to a niece; Biological: genetic strength was such that this did not result in reproductive harm.

B. Making sense of the context of barrenness (puzzles scholars—befits the covenant!)

1. Historical scholars are unsure why barrenness enters into the mix—perhaps an attempt to widen genetic diversity or branch family tree.

2. Reformed see this as an extension of God’s covenant lordship: control over the circumstances of the redemption of His people (the continued demand for Divine rescue)

C. Was Abram a believer? (Called out of Ur--a land of ziggurats and covenants)

1. Abram was a Shemite.

2. No indication that belief in the Promise was central to Terah’s line in Abram’s day.

3. It was possible he waqs called out of a pagan family—one with vestiges of religious life…but one of whom the common biblical phrases “built an altar” and “called on the Name of the Lord” seem absent. (Ur & Haran; centers of worship of the Mesopotamian moon gods Nanna & Sin)

D. Sound check: first mention of the Abramic Promise

1. Now the Lord said[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+12%3A1-3&version=ESV#fen-ESV-300a)] to Abram, “Go from your country[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+12%3A1-3&version=ESV#fen-ESV-300b)] and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

 2. Elements:

a. Leave the Familiar (country, family, security)

b. Faith: “land I will show you” (not identified yet…how do we know? NT!)

(Hebrews 11:8-10) 8By faith Abraham **obeyed when he was called** to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, **not knowing where he was going.** 9By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

c. God will bless: nation (reproductive wealth), a name (reputational wealth), land (geographic wealth) and spiritual wealth (a blessing to some, judgment to others)

d. consequences: those who bless Abe: blessed

those who don’t bless Abe: cursed (we will see this work itself out very starkly as Abe deals with the heads of other nations…)

E. Abram’s Lot: a vested interest? (foreshadowing concern; tells us a bit about Abe)

1. Why is Lot with Abram? (dad died, Abram has taken him under his wing)

2. Perhaps some sibling pressure from Sarai added to the mix…

F. Fleeing to Egypt: the original escape? (circumstances that move us)

1. Why Egypt? (severe famine in land and the Nile may have been the only fertile area “nearby”; had to leave Canaan…)

2. When will God send His Redemptive line into the wiles of Egypt? (Joseph with infant Jesus)

G. Ladies, how would you feel? (saving his skin—Sarai as human shield)

1. Husband sees risk to self and so urges you to lie so he can escape physical harm; there is also an added bonus to make a little bank on the side

2. This is a defining moment in the compromising of the covenant which will set a tone to be repeated in varying ways (with Abimilech and with Hagar); risks?

a. If Pharaoh takes her as a wife and so grafts Egypt into the line of the Covenant Promise…

b. Emotional stress on Sarai as she stands to lose everything and has to remain in the presence of an utterly unfamiliar people with unfamiliar customs

c. Abram’s line would be absorbed into and swallowed by the most powerful empire of the day…

3. Other options: Stand firm, protect Sarai & marriage vow…and Covenant promise at own peril (isn’t this the substance of the best of heroes?)

H. A Lesson from a Pagan (ever been chided by an unbeliever to do the right thing?)

1. Pharaoh reveals the unfounded nature of Abram’s fears—he took Sarai’s marriage vows seriously now)

2. The Lord steps in where Abram does not/cannot (remember additional barrier was Egypt's rejection of nomadic herdsmen) to rescue

3. Pharaoh, as was common to most relationships with pagan deities, probably suspects the plagues are because of Sarai and Abe’s god/gods and so sends her back to Abe; Abe is able to keep the bride price and (prob.) Sarai’s maidservant Hagar—all as a means to most likely assuage the wrath of these deities

4. In a strange twist on tragedy, God keeps the “bless those who bless you” promise sending Abe back to Shechem with much more wealth than he brought! (Herds? Check. Servants? Check. Children. Um…..How can I become a great nation without the obvious? (cue the barrenness theme)

LESSON 11

1. **Overview**

Genuflection of the Soul 13 Why does Moses reiterate Abe’s wealth? (a reminder of God’s providence—and blessing despite our sin; what is left out?)

Sound check: Where does Abe stand with the Lord? (returns to Altar between Bethel (House of God) and Ai) Can too much of a good thing be harmful? (“carrying capacity”; God’s means of spreading them out)

What kind of a man was Abram? (two traits of a leader)

Why the parenthetical? (foreshadowing future destruction reassuring Zoar once existed)

Sound check: expounding on the Abramic Promise

1. **Read Genesis 13** (2:31)
2. **Discuss**
   * + 1. Why does Moses reiterate Abe’s wealth? (a reminder of God’s providence—and blessing despite our sin; what is left out?)
3. Consider how electrifying this would be in its "present" story-telling context.
   1. Israel just left where?
   2. With what beyond the clothing on their backs? Why?
      1. Ex. 12:33-36

**The Exodus**

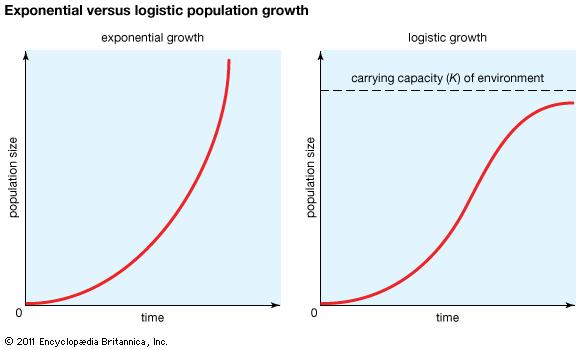
33The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, “We shall all be dead.” 34So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. 35The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. 36And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

* + 1. The Egyptians were polytheistic and so they handled there gods is like manner--genuflect to the one you need to act and any that were displeased would top the list as emergencies were obviously more urgent than other requests.
    2. The god of the Jews was not only in control at the moment (for, if you study the Plagues more deeply, see each of them as a direct and systematic onslaught of the True God against specific Egyptian Deities) but also had leveled the very heart of Ra by eliminating His son and heir; you might say that the sun set on the Sun God and whatever light was going to be visible after bringing the most powerful Empire of the day to its knees would be from the blessing of Moses--again the Promise made to Abraham!!
    3. The easiest way to placate this Powerful God was through rich offerings…give it the best of what was left---imagine this scene if you will….crazy, huh?

1. The very thing that happened to Abraham as he left a brow-beaten Pharaoh is the same thing that just happened to Moses and the people of Israel--merely on a grander scale.
2. God is demonstrating His Providence (ordinary means of His Lordship)…and Miraculous-ness (extraordinary demonstrations of His Lordship)
   1. Providential examples
   2. Miraculous examples  
      * 1. Sound check: Where does Abe stand with the Lord? (returns to Altar between Bethel (House of God) and Ai)
3. He returns to the place where God promised him the land.
4. He returns to where he had worshipped the Lord--and calls upon His Name.

* + - 1. Can too much of a good thing be harmful?

1. Paradoxically, blessing, rather than famine, is what provoked the next challenge…and it was Egypt who made Abram so (the Hebrew phrasing here is "possessions were so severe")--so why is this okay…to "plunder" the Egyptians?
   1. The Lord did it (Plagues made this obvious…and the last I checked, we should not be I the business of reminding God how to execute His office
   2. It was actually voluntarily by God's compulsion…
2. There is an interesting ecological concept called "carrying capacity" which describes the size of a particular population that a given ecosystem can reasonably sustain. It is defined by a curve that rises, peaks, dips, then levels-off (see diagram below)



1. Is this a bad thing? It takes good--even great circumstances to even promote such exponential growth--so, at first, it seems tremendous.
2. Then, eventually, reality catches up and keeps things in check. Humans have the ability to see this coming, and so--with death oft avoided (though a few skirmishes occurred) men can separate and move on to "greener pastures"
3. What is going on from a Spiritual perspective?
   1. God is setting up the events of the future
   2. God is spreading them out
   3. God is testing Abram and Lot's faith
      * 1. What kind of a man was Abram? (two traits of good leader--one other…well)
4. Peacemaker:
   1. Abram chose to preserve both groups and provide what they needed to flourish.
   2. Treated both parties as family/equals and treated Lot like a big boy capable of taking care his family…
5. Generous
   1. Abram gave Lot first pick--(even fantasy football trades for picks demand something in return)
   2. Abram trusted in God to provide (Faith)…made possible by God's sovereignty
   3. What kind of man is Lot?
      1. Seems to operate off of what he can see
      2. Note verse 10… 10And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt
      3. Moses's recounting of Lot sends chills down the spine of those listening closely as he highlights comparisons to what he saw…garden of Eden (nice)..Egypt…(oh)…Sodom…(oh my); evidently, sin is independent of environment--look where it started…
      4. Lot's presumptive arrogance (at best) to camp near evil…or his lust for worldy wealth (at worst) draws him into dangers I can only imagine Abram avoided
         1. Why the parenthetical? (foreshadowing future destruction reassuring Zoar once existed)
6. Zoar did not exist in the time of Moses
7. Zoar holds significance in that Lot begged the Angels that were sent to rescue him if he could flee there (incidentally, the name means "small")…and Lot, though allowed to flee there, had to leave because, presumably, the conditions were inhabitable (think sulfuric fumes pervading and persisting in every nook & cranny)
8. Zoar stands (or its not standing) as a testament to God's feeling towards sin in a graphic way (eg. a reverse "Ebenezer"--"what means this lack of stones?"
   * + 1. Sound check: expounding on the Abramic Promise
9. Abram, while faith-driven, is told to look up
   1. While God wants us to be trusting, He uses the physical world as the context in which His Divine will operates
   2. Science has value…but it cannot be made foundational! (particularly to rule over Scripture/Theology)
   3. This is similar to the panoramic view Moses will get as he takes in the Promised land in Deut 34.
   4. (Btw)…Do you think retelling the inception of the Covenant Promise to what would become Israel had any effect on the One (Moses)/ones (Israel) destined to reach it? (its partial fulfillment at least)
10. Land was promised (a place to live)
11. Ancestors were promised (a people to live there); "dust of the Earth"-OT--seen as the Israelite People (Gentiles were also assimilated) and NT…wholesale inclusion of Gentiles (grafted in to the root of Jesse through Christ.
12. Wealth (offspring all but guaranteed this; therefore there would be a means by which the people could live
13. God promised Himself as evidenced through Abram's worship

LESSON 12

After twelve years of being under [Elamite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elam) rule, in the thirteenth year, the [Cities of the Plain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodom_and_Gomorrah) rebelled against Chedorlaomer. This spurred a domino effect that prompted the Elamite king to regain control. To ensure his success, he called upon three other allies from Shinar, Ellasar, and Tidal "nations" regions. (Genesis 14:9); the five kings from the cities of the plain joined forces against Chedorlaomer and the 3 kings and, were defeated. Lot was captured (in the defeat of Sodom) and when a servant escaped and told Abe, Abram summoned 318 trained men (Amorite allies) and pursued Chedorlaomer north of Damascus and ended his 14 year reign.

1. **Overview**

First Communion 14 Wait, isn't the Bible just about Redemptive History? (the Historicity of Scripture)

Checking in with History: (the war of 9 kings)

Do people "fall from grace" in a day? (the danger of Lot's progression)

God's Providence & Plants (A priest with a timely message)

Who is Melchizedek? (prophet, priest and king--wait…)

Important? (the writer of Hebrews says so…)

1. **Read Genesis 14** (3:45)
2. **Discuss**
3. Wait, isn't the Bible just about Redemptive History? (the Historicity of Scripture)
4. While Scripture is God's Revelation of Himself and His bringing a people to Himself, greater history is the context in which this particular thread is told.
5. Historicity grants Scripture external toe-holds so that we can understand its contexts.
6. Scripture's historical legitimacy finds validation through the fields of archaeology and anthropology.
7. Scripture stands, in some cases, as a most accurate, detailed, and mss-laden ancient document. (eg. Iliad vs. Bible)
8. Checking in with History: (the war of 9 kings)
9. Story (read inset to right)
10. Noteworthy things:
    1. significance of the addition of Chedorlaomer's allies (3 kings) (further makes Abram's rescue all the more miraculous)
    2. Bitumen pits: this, perhaps is some wicked foreshadowing as the king of Sodom's name is mentioned alongside pits of cementitious petroleum products known as asphalt. Here some fell in them, later on, these same liquids could come into play as Lot flees the very region Abram avoided.
    3. What seemed to be Chedorlaomer's MO in following the Kings of Sodom & Gomorrah? (spoils of war)
11. Do people "fall from grace" in a day? (the danger of Lot's progression)
12. Note Lot's progression from camping near Sodom (13:12) to living in it (!9) and acting as a respected citizen of Sodom (19).
13. Calvin's commentary on Genesis 13:13:

"13. ***But the men of Sodom***. Lot thought himself happy that so rich a habitation had fallen to his share: but he learns at length, that the choice to which he had hastened, with a rashness equal to his avarice, had been unhappily granted to him; since he had to deal with proud and perverse neighbors, with whose conduct it was much harder to bear, than it was to contend with the sterility of the earth. Therefore, seeing that he was led away solely by the pleasantness of the prospect, he pays the penalty of his foolish cupidity [greed]. Let us then learn by this example, that our eyes are not to be trusted; but that we must rather be on our guard lest we be ensnared by them, and be encircled, unawares, with many evils; just as Lot, when he fancied that he was dwelling in paradise, was nearly plunged into the depths of hell."

1. God's Providence & Plants (A priest with a timely message)
2. WORDS of COMFORT: Abram finds out that his nephew has been captured. Rather than simply seeking to fix the problem by detailing the best laid plans for a rescue, God takes time to show Abe what? (the Land God Promised)
   1. Calvin, very perceptively, notes the behind-the-scenes action here: Moses is communicating Abram's sadness and the best way to deal with such sadness. Calvin says:

"14. ***And the Lord said unto Abram***. Moses now relates that after Abram was separated from his nephew, divine consolation was administered for the appeasing of his mind. There is no doubt that the wound inflicted by that separation was very severe, since he was obliged to send away one who was not less dear to him than his own life. When it is said, therefore, that the Lord spoke, the circumstance of time requires to be noted; as if he had said, that the medicine of God's word was now brought to alleviate his pain. And thus he teaches us, that the best remedy for the mitigation and the cure of sadness, is placed in the word of God."

* 1. This was actually an ancient custom…that when tracts of land were sold and bought, the transaction was finalized by a visit of the new owner to the tract where the previous & present owners would walk a length of the property together (God did this with Abram)

1. WORDS of COURAGE: When Abram is faced with compromise, he not only avoids the whiff of temptation--he skirts the kitchen entirely. Where'd he get the strength? Church. What?
   1. He is battle-torn and the adrenaline of a harried rescue has left his spirit in shreds (like our work week)
   2. Who is to say there won't be retaliation by the Allies of Chedorlaomer once they lick their wounds…
   3. Out of seemingly nowhere arrives this King who happens to be a priest…with prophetic words.

This, incidentally, relieves some of the most acute pressures men feel. One of the greatest advantages of having elder men is the notion of *rest*--I don't have to face things alone…I can rely on the wisdom & aid of those who know more than I do…and so I can rest…

* 1. Abram--perhaps for the first time, realizes:
     1. He is not alone.
     2. He can be schooled by one wiser than he (Part of growing up into a man is the realization that, as you look around, you are increasingly the one with whom the buck stops--this is felt keenly
        1. when you get married (I remember dreaming of a day when I could have 2 spiritual counselors--one in my father…the other, my father-in-law…but, alas…it was not to be and became a cost--one I would willingly pay, to marry my wife)
        2. you lose a dad (this, perhaps, is more painful than any other aspect)
  2. Abe now has the guidance and strength to Act on who God is, and who he learned he was (indispensable value of good theology--what we are doing right now)

1. Who is Melchizedek?
   * + 1. King: Melchizedek: "melek"-"tzedek" Lit. King of Righteousness; also King of Salem: Lit "King of Shalom"--King of Peace…from where?...what if I told you the city he ruled would later be called Jeru-Shalom? (Jerusalem!)
       2. Priest : He came bearing provisions--an immediate need after the rigours of battle…sated thirst and hunger…and nerves (they don't call it liquid courage for nothing)
       3. Prophet: He came to Abram with new words of Revelation of God--with a message that taught the most fundamental aspects to living rightly:

The fundamental nature of the Creator/creature distinction here is impossible to avoid…and sets the tone for what Abram says & does in the light of immediate "temptation"

* + - * 1. Who is God? Most High--Creator of Heaven & Earth
        2. Who are you? Blessed by that very same God
        3. Who is to be blessed? God Most High
        4. Who did what? Delivered your enemies into your hand

1. Does church matter?
   * + - 1. Encourages the soul (you are not alone--you have an Almighty Father behind you all the way)
         2. Gives strength & wisdom (God has given us Himself as a means by which we are to navigate life…"a better way")
         3. Connection to Grace: Communion is a means of grace
     1. While historically the dual components so written "bread and wine" mean a full dinner complement (shorthand)--one cannot help but see Moses' first mention of a priest in sacramental terms--and on the heels of a Passover meal (Christ's archetype for communion) to boot.
     2. Is there greater significance here?...yes
2. Does giving credit where credit is due matter? (A deadly plagiarism avoided--and 3 things put into perspective)
   1. Abe sees who **God** is rightly (Sovereign Creator; transcendent--wholly other, worthy of worship; Theology Proper in systematics)--but with Immanence thrown in (that is, that aspect of God where He personally cares, sustains, and loves each of His children)
   2. Abe sees him**self** rightly (dependent creature; blessed by this Sovereign God--he knows who he is and so he has an identity)
   3. Abe sees the **World** rightly: (temporal as wealth goes; avoids mixing in with tainted goods & worldviews; does not even allow for what *might* happen)--God being stripped of His provision/Sovereignty and credit going to a secular ruler…
   4. Abe offers Melchizedek a tithe (most likely not the ancient tradition of a "king's tithe", but rather a recognition of him being a priest of the true God and a tacit recognition of his agreement in regards to his successes)
   5. Abe does not permit himself to share in the spoils--but allows his allies to benefit in their share: Why? This protects the fact that it was God who promised and made Abram rich--for none could take the credit. Where did Abram get this idea? The sermon just spoken to him by his newfound pastor.
3. Important? The writer of Hebrews thinks so **Hebrews 7:1, 7-10, 13-17, 22-25**

7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything.

7It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. 8In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. 9One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, 10for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

13For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. 14For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, 16who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. 17For it is witnessed of him,

“You are a priest forever,  
    after the order of Melchizedek.”

22This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

23The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%207&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30073b)] those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

LESSON 13&14

1. **Overview**

The Abramic Covenant 15 Is Abe's fear legitimate? (where comfort finds its strength)

Elieze..who? Where'd he come from? (taking things into your own hands)

Did Abram have a case to question God? (cultural stigma; nature of God's Promise)

A Covenant cut in blood (parts of a near eastern Suzerain-Vassal Treaty)

Smoking pot?' Blazing torch? What is God doing? What is God saying? (remember audience)

1. **Read Genesis 15** (2:46)
2. **Discuss**

Is Abe's fear legitimate? (where comfort finds its strength)

Consider what just happened:

Nations of Kings just conquered could seek revenge (counterattack)

King of Sodom could turn on Abe as a gift refused is no light snub in Ancient cultures (eg. refusal of hospitality is seen as affront on reputation; a "light" version of this sticks in our culture to the unwritten "law" parents teach their children not refuse to eat what is served to you as a guest--no matter how they feel about the same dish at home)

Lot doesn't fit the bill of an acceptable heir--so how does God want me to fulfill the Promise?

Elieze..who? Where'd he come from? (taking things into your own hands)

Out of nowhere, a trusted servant emerges: Eliezer of Damascus

This was a practice common to those who were childless--an heir would be adopted (Nuzi texts--1000 ancient texts found in Iraq dating back to 1500 BC attest to this)

How do we know Eliezer was trusted?

He was given the potential job of future patriarch--even the care of Abe's own wife

He was to be entrusted with the Covenant Promise--future Heir

He was to be entrusted with land, flocks, and wealth--none of these things is given over lightly…

Did Abram have a case to question God? (cultural stigma; nature of God's Promise)

Lesser reason perhaps: childlessness was viewed as a form of divine judgement by Pagans and Believers alike

Greater reason: how could he fulfill the Covenant Promise if having kids was the very means by which the Promise would come?

NOTE: feel the language here…."how could *he* fulfill the Promise"….the quizzical blend of God's sovereignty and human responsibility is not lost here, but one cannot help but think that Abe's (& Sarai's particularly) patience was being heavily taxed--they weren't exactly young!

A Covenant cut in blood (parts of a near eastern Suzerain-Vassal Treaty)

Covenants are 'cut' not made

Not a deal (both have bargaining power)

Not a contract (entrance for both is voluntary; consequences are merely legal)

This is both deeper and far more obligatory…

Even primitive man has a sense of the gravity of *cutting* a covenant:



Meredith Kline: archaeology seems to testify to its historical significance & motif: Three parts

Suzerain Benevolence: in which the conquering king lays out the ways in which he has been loving & merciful…

Vassal Loyalty: in which the covenant stipulations are detailed…

Consequences (Blessing for obedience/Cursing for disobedience)

Divine Covenant seems to parallel (quite richly)

Divine benevolence: How was God good?

Human loyalty: What are we responsible to do to keep the covenant?

Consequences: Blessing if we obey (naturally)

Cursing if we disobey (only consistent with God's character)

The Unfolding of the Abramic Covenant: Trace each part…in ch 15: 1-6

How was God good to Abram?

15 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, **I am your shield**; your reward shall be very great.” 2But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+15&version=ESV#fen-ESV-363a)] childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” 4And behold, the word of the Lord came to him**: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+15&version=ESV#fen-ESV-365b)**] shall be your heir.”** 5And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “**So shall your offspring be**.” 6And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

What was Abram to do to keep the covenant?

Trust in His Shield

Have a kid

Remember the Promise (hard to forget as he had been told that his descendants would be like the grains of sand--that which walked in and tracked into almost everything (eg. think Anakin EPISODE II) and the stars--that which he would see practically every night in an arid clime)

What were the consequences?

Obedience? Promised Land, Wealth, Life, and, ultimately God Himself

Disobedience? No land, Only the wealth you can scrape together on your own, Death….and, ultimately, yourself

Smoking pot?' Blazing torch? What is God doing? What is God saying?

Imagine this scene…RPC children's church

OT storytime

Do want to hear the story of Abram and the Covenant?

Mixed cheers…some at the word story, some--even at Abram,….Covenant (what?)…only those exposed to the HALO ® video franchise might care to try that one on for size--for the wrong reasons)

God told Abram to kill some animals (at this point all the guys are awake & wide-eyed; the girls wish they were back in the sanctuary)

Abram fell asleep

Then a smoking pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces….huh?....where's the conflict…resolution?

How would an unreformed Sunday school teacher explain this with significance? Not their fault--just without context unless Covenantal view imbues significance….see here with the extreme: the kids of the Children of Israel….

Imagine this scene…Abram ringed by young children in the wilderness…

OT storytime

Do want to hear the story of Abram and the Covenant?

Cheers…some at the word story, some--even at Abram,….Covenant? (this electrifies because the boys know that blood is up ahead…and the girls are keenly aware that love is sure to be spoken)

God told Abram to kill some animals (all have heard of this--some have seen it done as leaders have made covenants with other people groups…and all have seen it done in a way as the sacrificial system is still in play in Israel)

Abram fell asleep (here the tension rises as every child knows that the only way to do a covenant is for both parties to walk through the cut pieces! Where is Abe? What is he doing?--doesn't he know he has responsibilities to our People?)

Then a smoking pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces….(Hooray! This is electrifying as the children cheer, some clap--other hoot, a few get up and high five or do chest bumps--others are standing and pointing excitedly to the Greater Fire behind them) Why?

What is God doing?

Why the line about the birds? (symbolic of unclean nations set against the descendants of Abraham)

What is walking through the pieces?

It is not what, but Who.

To us, these are weird images, to wandering Israel, the Smoking Pot and Flaming Torch is the very manifestation of God….unmistakable because it is Who is leading them Day & Night to the Promised Land!

What is God saying?

By walking through the pieces

God is trumpeting a covenant is not a deal (parties are not equal)

God is trumpeting a covenant is not a contract (God has volunteered to a binding relationship greater than the law)

God is saying:

) If You, Abram, break the covenant, may what happened to these animals happen to Me.

) If I break the covenant, may what happened to these animals happen to ME.

What? This, in all of its simple profundity, is the Gospel.

This is the fullest picture to date of the Promise Given to Adam and archetype of the coming Messiah

To us, these are weird images, to wandering Israel, the Smoking Pot and Flaming Torch is the very manifestation of God….unmistakable because it is Who is leading them Day & Night to the Promised Land!

A God who has just spoken plainly about His intentions to send a Promise born of man, yet send Himself--even if we break the covenant!

God spells out to Abe the very slavery Moses & the people went through (though very differently from one another)

* + 1. It will take God's supernatural act of redemption for Israel to be freed from slavery & inherit Canaan.
    2. God will make good on His promise (blessings to Abe, cursings to those who resist God's people)
    3. Evidently the Amorites--now allied with Abe are yet to do a terrible thing (I kings 21 mentions the unparalleled idolatry of Ahab…and the only comparison made? The Amorites)
    4. So far the only the Amorites have been mentioned as those to be dealt with regarding the procuring of the promised land of Canaan. Now the rest of the enemies are mentioned by name. (a battle plan of sorts for the future patriarch defined by geographical borders and named inhabitants)

LESSON 15

1. **Overview**

The Abramic Covenant: 16 What does it look like to be Set Apart? (taking things into your own hands)

Millennial Version Are there consequences in seeking to do God's job for Him? (the logical consequences of ideas)

Does Israel see the great irony? (In today's story, with whom ought Israel identify more--Sarai or Hagar?)

How wide is God's mercy? (consider who is being sustained here-and its consequences for today)

1. **Read Genesis 16** (2:26)
2. **Discuss**
   1. What does it look like to be Set Apart? (taking things into your own hands)
      * 1. Existential Status: A Chosen People--now officially identified from all humanity…let's review



* + - 1. Moral Status
         1. Standard of right is God's character
         2. Obligations extend from this:

We are to act in accordance with God's revealed self

God has revealed Himself as Creator, therefore we are to submit to Him

God has revealed Promises to us (Abe was promised to become a great nation)

There is a strange interplay between God's sovereignty and our responsibility

Fulfilling this involves having children (and, as far as Abram knows, virgin conception isn't even a thing of the future---though we know it is!)

This brings with it certain responsibilities:

Your parents were given you by God…but they had to be involved in the process

It doesn't seem that Abe (personally tasked with the physical & spiritual headship of the family) considered the age-old tradition of family-making….so

Sarai, in her impatience, suggests an option permitted by the Code of Hammurabi & various texts from Nuzi & Nimrud hence practiced in the Ancient Near-East. It declared that the chief wife had authority over children born in this way not the slave wife. ("on the knees" of the chief wife--oft accompanied by wailing and birth pangs to make the ownership palpable.

Abe--seemingly passive in his demand to explore how God means to accomplish this, consents. (there is no recorded discussion, no resistance, he simply appears to capitulate--relinquish his Adamic responsibilities…and mirror his Adamic ancestor!)

What seemingly happens in Scripture when men are passive? Here are a few scenes

Adam & Eve (serpent wisely chooses to get to Adam through Eve--Adam does nothing to protect her)

By the way; ever notice that God came to Mary first to tell her the Messiah would come through her---but God showed Joseph, in a vision that the child was His (God's) and he was to marry her and call Him Jesus--Joseph carried out the duties given him buy the Lord.

Lot (daughters agree that there are no eligible males available in the caves on the outskirts of the rubble of Sodom and so get dad drunk and have children by him)..we will save the worst of it for ch 19…

Abe with Sarai: Abimelech & Pharaoh taker her into their harem (on separate occasions and Abe does nothing to protect her)

Isaac is passive in regards to giving the Blessing to Jacob rather than Esau--and so Rebekah brings Jacob's deception training to completion as he has to flee for his life and Rebekah loses the very presence of the son she is seeking to establish.

As amazing as Moses was, passivity struck his home as well. Though we seem to lose track of Zipporah, she plays the (sadly common) role of spiritual 2"x4" to her husband as she ends up circumcising her son and throwing the foreskin at Moses' feet in disgust as he abdicated a perfect opportunity to lead his family and his people. By the way, she helped avoid Moses' immediate death as God's role of covenant author and mediator was being ignored (which would have great longterm consequences for those who looked to Moses as the human mediator of the same covenant. (Ex. 4)

What was Abe to do? Perhaps it is easier to see clearly what he was not to do….Points to consider:

The Genesis archetype for marriage appears singular in its expression(not polygamous)

Recorded polygamy in Scripture thus far seems limited/linked to unbelief (remember boasting of Arch villain Lamech?)

Later on: polygamy is always associated with strife (Abe himself (same chapter!), Jacob…)

Our perspective now, not Abe's

Monogamy is seen as one defining characteristic of officers of the church (I Tim. 3:2)

* 1. Are there consequences in seeking to do God's job for Him? (the logical consequences of ideas--as it relates to Sarai's little suggestion)
     + 1. Sarai's context: immediate history

(To their credit, Abram & Sarai lived in Canaan 10 years before Abe took Hagar as a wife)

1. What did Sarai think would happen? Back to the whole polygamy thing…the tenor of God's commitment to us as our Bridegroom is so singular that His Jealousy is based on this---what would make one think that a human could make good on something in an area God Himself does not venture?
2. Her desire for an heir overwhelms the logic of the web she would create…
3. Hagar's pregnancy vaulted her into a new cultural spotlight and highlighted Sarai's barrenness; Hagar acted on this to compound the problem
4. Sarai--rightly (but just a little late) reminds Abram of his responsibility to lead and awkwardly places blame at his feet (of course the narrative shows all are culpable for the tense situation…but it is Abram's yoke to bear) and appeals to God's higher counsel. I cannot help but think Abram, stung by the shift in Sarai's supposed plan, did not want to deal with it head on, and so appealed to an ancient custom (described in, you guessed it, the Code of Hammurabi!) that gave Sarai the ability to treat her as a slave (though not sell her).
5. Sarai decided to make life unbearable and Hagar fled to the wilderness rather than submitting to a harsh environment.
6. Abram must have been beside himself…I wonder how long it took Sarai to realize what she potentially caused:
7. Ever lose sight of your child and panic for a time….all kinds of things stream through your head---usually the worst
8. To Abe (& Sarai in sober moments) Hagar is carrying the Child of Promise destined from the time of Adam to redeem humanity and right the wrongs of the Fall--and he's gone! (not just anywhere--but the Near-Eastern wilderness!--think Man vs. Wild.
9. My guess is that a search party like no other was formed…imagine how Sarai felt…
   * + 1. Current context: long term history
10. What if I said that 9/11 is related to Abram deciding to participate in Sarai's plan?
11. What comes as a result of this uninspired union? (Ishmael)
12. Abram, through Ishmael, becomes the father of the Arabs

The descendants of Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham through Keturah were given the eastern country and are referred to as the children or people of the east. They are the forefathers of the Arabs. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, traces his lineage back to Ishmael through his first born son, Nabaioth.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. The Dome of the Rock--disputed holy ground… seen by jews as site of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac & holy of Holies during Temple period; Islam sees it as site of Abe attempted sacrifice of Ishmael and the location where Muhammad ascended into heaven.
2. A difficulty both group are contending with--whether they acknowledge it or not, is the fact God promised to make both into great nations--one, through the Promise…the other, through God's grace, yes…but cursed from the get-go…and heavily involved in persecuting the child/children of Promise from Isaac on out…till today! (consider the work of Nathaniel & NHMI)
   1. Does Israel see the great irony? (In today's story, with whom ought Israel identify more--Sarai or Hagar?)
      * 1. Consider, again the historical context---the story outside the story.
           1. Moses is sharing this fresh with the Children of Israel
           2. With whom could the Israelites relate more closely: Sarai or Hagar?

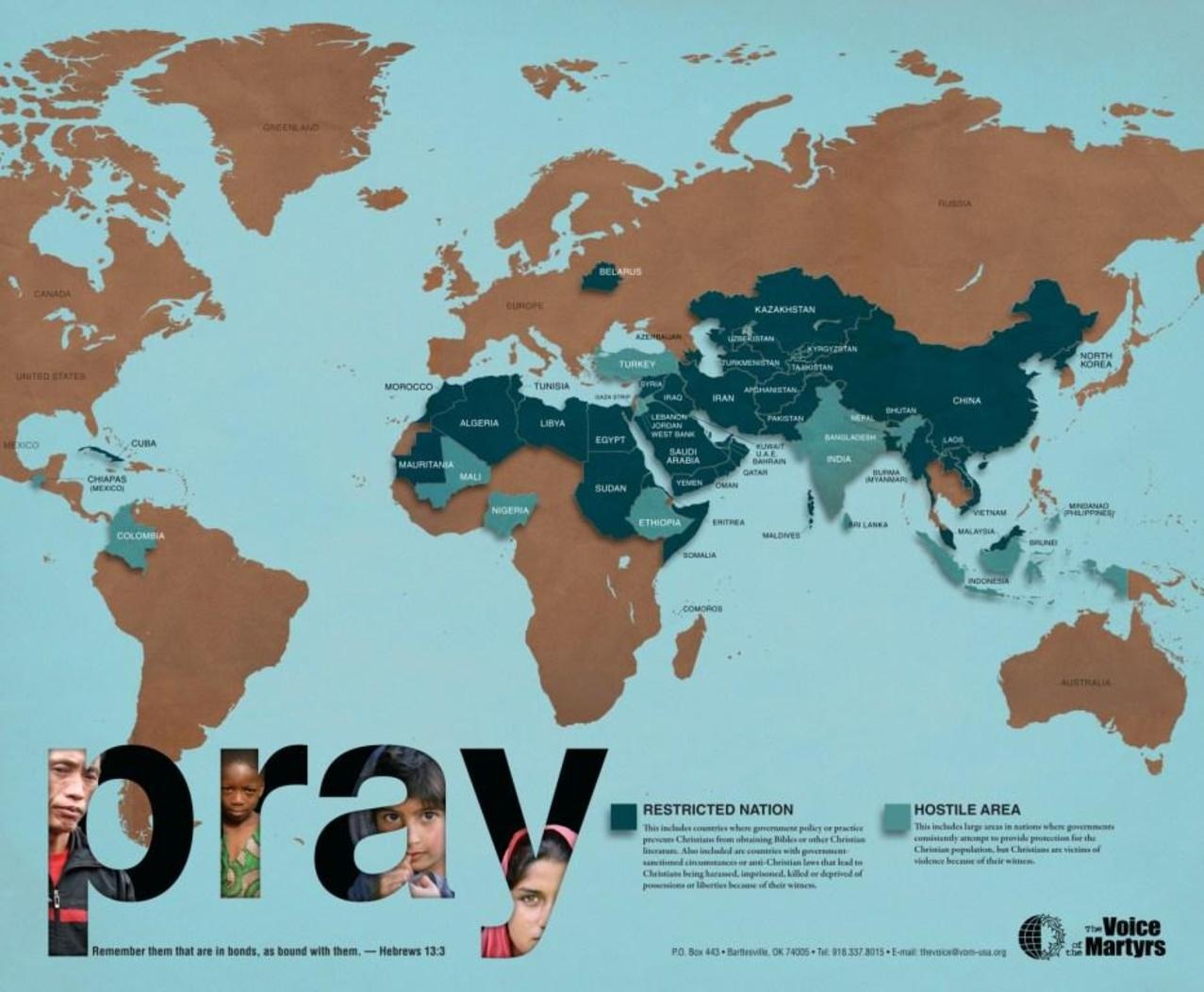
Sarai: the Hebrew harsh taskmaster

Hagar: the Egyptian fugitive wanderer, alone in the wilderness?

* + - * 1. Do you see how this would offend the spiritual and cultural sensitivities of the Israelites? Consider where they just came from….ouch.
  1. How wide is God's mercy? (consider who is being sustained here-and its consequences for today)
     + 1. Verses 7-11 is probably read with a lump in the throat of most Jews--it is a mercy difficult to swallow.
          1. Why didn't Jehovah let them be? It could have ended there…
          2. Irony again? Jehovah Jireh…My Provider….
          3. Observations while visiting an Islamic school in Tampa (humbled and burdened)
       2. Verse 12 relaxes the lump as it seems pejorative, but upon whom has this "donkey of a man" unleashed his rabble-rousing legacy?
          1. Israel at the start…
          2. Christianity in later times (see Voice of the Martyrs' Prayer map of persecution below)

Note overwhelming religious worldview of hostile/restricted areas

God's Promises reign true--blessings and cursings



LESSON 16

1. **Overview**

The Abrahamic Covenant: 17 What does it look like to be Set Apart? (taking righteous action as a result of obedience)

Illustrated Version Are there consequences in serving a Sovereign God? (the logical consequences of submission)

How do I know if I believe? (the surest sign you trust someone else)

1. **Read Genesis 17** (4:16)
2. **Discuss**
   1. What does it look like to be Set Apart? (taking things into your own hands)
      * 1. God, in this reiteration of a reiteration, of a reiteration of the Covenant details the next stages in its unfolding:
           1. Same God: God pronounces His own exalted title/place, Abe's known responsibility in the covenant, and God's understood promise
           2. A New Identity: Abram ('exalted father') 🡪 Abraham ('father of many nations'); it is a focal shift from aristocratic ancestry to many offspring[[4]](#footnote-4)
           3. An Expanded covenant: I just love this train of thought…." 6 I will make you *exceedingly* fruitful, and I will make you into nations, ***and kings shall come from you***. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you." (it is as if this were the cultural mandate but richer…imagine…if the cultural mandate was a warm beverage, this is one with sweet, whipped cream adorning it…and attached to the cup is a tag that allows for bottomless refills for your kids and grandkids alike…)

Eg. cf. vv12-14

Born & bought: the covenant promises are not only for descendants, but also for foreigners assumed into the household of faith; this is foreshadowing those "far off" who will have been brought near--that is, in Abe's future, foreigners wandering with Moses, those who would join Joshua…and even the Gentiles of the NT to be grafted in!

* + - * 1. A New Sign: We haven't spoke about this in detail because it was less obvious before and less personal (the men in the room understand what I mean), but signs accompanied Covenants; a sign served as an external expression of an internal work (sounds familiar if you are up on your Sacramental language because these signs are the predecessors of the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion with which we are familiar; consider:

Adamic sign: Tree of Life (linked to Life for those obedient)

Noahic Sign: Rainbow (linked to life--preservation from flooding) for those obedient; note how God's covenant blessing spill over to unbelievers by virtue of Promise to believers…(the Rainbow is actually a baleful reminder of God's presence & power to those who do not believe…they see it, adore it, photograph it…but have little clue to its eternal significance)

Abrahamic sign: circumcision

* + - 1. How is circumcision better than a rainbow? (are you crazy?)
         1. It is bloody (things have to get worse before they get better (while the severity of sin and sobriety of pain is not so obvious in a rainbow--see III.d.iii above, it is impossible to misunderstand the personal gravity of this sign. We cannot forget that Abraham still understands that God can demand anything from him (while Abe did not walk through the slaughtered animals--he understood what it meant)--and the bloodiness of this sign, while spikes the immediate fear…and makes for uncomfortable conversations around the stuffed pita, it may have calmed Abe's fears that more blood than this & the sacrifices was needed)
         2. It is more circumspect (no pun intended) in that, in its simplicity, captures more meaning than previous signs (scientists and philosophers call this "elegance"--simplicity, not at the expense of explaining power, but rather to expand it)
         3. It is National: While the other signs were still presented to God's people, they were universal in scope (there were 8 people on the planet when Noah was tasked with a fresh start!), God is beginning to define the personal responsibilities of Patriarchal fathers with tremendous detail; here generational continuance finds its most articulate expression and it will later be termed as the "Covenant made with the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob"
         4. It is Graphic: One could say that it is illustrative in 2 ways;

It, very poignantly, demonstrated the result of rejecting the Covenant: you were cut-off from God & His People to spiritually wither away (v 14); it seems strange for God to use a pejorative sign to signify redemption, but life and death are linked strongly this side of Heaven; it, in its severity, points to the judgment Christ would suffer to bring life to His People.

It was persistent: males were reminded that they were set apart from all other people groups every time they changed, bathed, used the restroom--or joined with their wives.

This begs the question…why isn't this a big to-do today? Most of us are circumcised in the hospital with much pomp & circumstance…what happened? How am I a child of Abraham if it happened without being recognized?

While it is a slightly jarring question for us, it actually convened the first Ecumenical Council in the history of the Church!

Christian Jews in the first century had a faction grow amongst them that taught that, in order to become Christian, one had to continue to obey the law of Moses and so, in order to become a believer, one had to first receive the OT sign of the covenant (essentially they were saying that one had to be religiously Jewish before they could become Christians)

This flummoxed the early church at Antioch and so the elders sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem where the heads of the church were located--and the Council of Jerusalem was convened.

After much debate, it was the testimony of P&B of how God was working amongst the Gentiles (even on their way to Jerusalem!) that swayed James to proclaim that circumcision was no longer the necessary sign--for the bloody, inferior sign was replaced by the bloodless belief in the Saviour--the Sacrificial Lamb who shed His blood once and for all.

Now circumcision is a voluntary, presumably hygienic, decision made prior to leaving the hospital with your new baby.

Without going into detail--The NT church has replaced bloody circumcision with bloodless baptism as a sign and seal of the Covenant as the need for a sign is still present and the language of Scripture explicitly joins the two. Because of this, we see the parallel of infant sign-giving (baptism) and the need to baptize adults only when they are introduced to the covenant at an older age. It is interesting to note that a chief argument amongst dissenters to infant baptism is that they would rather not give the sign (our language) before faith was present. Our reply? That's exactly what God did. I would fear, rather, to go against His example.

* + - 1. The Result of being Set Apart (God saves this for the latter portion of the chapter…He can't wait to tell Abraham the good news before He allows Abraham the time to enact the sign…)
  1. Are there consequences in serving a Sovereign God? (the logical consequences of submission)
     + 1. Abraham is instructed to rename Sarai ('princess') most likely focused on a noble descent 🡪 Sarah ('princess") focused more on her covenantal descendants; notice the parallel with Eve….God names Adam, Adam names Eve; God renames Abe, Abe renames Sarah (this is a demonstration of God's headship and His extension to husband headship)
       2. What is Abraham's initial reaction--after falling on his face? Why? Can we relate?...(Abraham is 99; Sarah is 90)

Sarah lives to be 127…and Abe 175…if we live to be 80 say…and translated (roughly) Sarah's fertile state to that of a, previously barren mind you, 45-50 year old woman (a rarity still--now celebrity status and reproductive tech is raising this….but we will soon find out how impossible it should have been)

* + - 1. Does Abraham immediately capitulate? What does he propose? Why?
         1. Ishmael is his son
         2. Ishmael is old enough to begin patriarchal training as a man (13 years, trad. marked by puberty); the Hebrew ritual of Bar Mitzvah was not yet established
         3. Why not? God has other plans. (God is reminding Abraham of needed supernatural involvement as opposed to a husband's will; also consider the prophecy: what if Christ was described as a wild donkey of a man? This is not good)
         4. God did hear Abraham's desire for a boy he loved…and would bless him…it would simply remain that Ishmael's descendants would be the recipients of the blessing as opposed to the source of the blessing (as planned by God--of course)
         5. Note that God--even before Abraham had a chance to bestow Sarah her new name, assumes it and promises a child to her.
  1. How do I know if I believe? (the surest sign you trust someone else)
     + 1. This is just a test:
          1. People who desire to see a particular candidate in office don't merely wish it they \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
          2. Chefs don't merely write about the dishes they enjoy they \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ them!
          3. Students who wish to do well in school do not merely show up for class, they \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
          4. How does my wife know I love her? When she bids me to take out the trash, I don't merely agree with her and move on--I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!
          5. God says: If you love me you will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (keep My commands; in a word? Obey)
       2. How do we know Abraham believed the Lord?
          1. He obeyed: he acted on what was prescribed
          2. He obeyed immediately (that day!--imagine having to explain this to the moms what you are about to do to their young ones. Imagine men's group that week. Where to start explaining this (I imagine that some may have thought Abraham was kidding at first…and then things became quite serious when Abe didn't waver).
          3. He obeyed completely: Scripture, in its antiquitous efficiency, leaves no males behind

LESSONS 17&18

1. **Overview**

The Abrahamic Covenant: 18 How important is hospitality? (three stories)

Theatrical Version What does it look like to be Set Apart? (just because you believe doesn't mean you believe)

What is an essential quality of a leader in the eyes of the Lord? (the power of eavesdropping)

What is prayer's purpose if we serve a Sovereign God?

Abe greets strangers with thein the most honorable way--this, quite naturally, makes it such that "the right of hospitality might be exercised with less danger" (Calvin)

1. **Read Genesis 18** (4:16)
2. **Discuss**
   1. How important is hospitality? (three stories)
      * 1. OT: Abraham & the three visitors
           1. What is ordinary? (visitors seeking shade from the heat of the day, Abe by the tent doing the same, Abe showing hospitality[[5]](#footnote-5))
           2. What is extraordinary? (Abe recognizing the Lord, Theophanies in general, promise given)
        2. NT: Paul & Barnabas in Lystra Acts 14; Romans 12:9-13; Hebrews 13:2)
           1. Story (Acts 14:8-13)-- even pagans see the value of hospitality

8 Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well,[b] 10 said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking. 11 And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

Wait--what does this have to do with hospitality?

* + - * 1. Healings occurred elsewhere in various Apostolic ministries, why the extreme reaction?)

The existence of an ancient legend may explain the wildly emotional response of the Lystrans to the healing of the cripple by Paul and Barnabas.

According to the legend, Zeus and Hermes (to use their Greek names) came to earth in the neighboring district of Phrygia disguised as human beings. They sought lodging but no one would show them ***hospitality*** and take them in. Finally, an old peasant couple, Philemon and his wife Baucis, welcomed them as house guests, even though it depleted their meager resources. The gods were angry and destroyed the whole population for their lack of hospitality, except for the gracious Philemon and Baucis. The couple’s humble cottage was transformed into a temple, of which they were given the charge until their death.

* + - 1. A childhood memory

I remember one Sunday in my youth that, as our family was preparing to leave church (I think dad had lockup duty) a family pulling into the church lot and approaching us with a need…Next thing I knew, they were following us in their dilapidated and overburdened station wagon as dad invited the family to our home. I remember, after a brief scramble to put more food on, the father timidly approaching the door and declining lunch and simply requesting gas money for their long trip. Having no real cash on hand, we implored them to stay for a meal but he declined--so my parents did what they could and filled a paper grocery bag with food that they could prepare and eat along the way. The memory never left me and I was always wondering why the family didn't join us…

Years later I read Hebrews 13: 1, 2 and this memory flooded back…

13 Let brotherly love continue. 2Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

and I still wonder to this day--it will be one of my first objectives in Heaven…

Where does the writer of Hebrews get this idea?

Abraham's example in Genesis 18 was a lasting expression of the Gospel that it serves as such in perpetuity!

* 1. What does it look like to be Set Apart? (just because you believe doesn't mean you believe)
     + 1. Sarah, in the midst of rushed meal preparations overhears Christ's reiterating what God had told Abraham--and she has a (reasonable as it may be) visceral reaction.
       2. While Abraham was quick to obey the Lord's commands regarding the sign of the Covenant, he too was initially skeptical regarding having a child through Sarah
       3. God seems to level Sarah's reaction as Abraham's responsibility (welcome to headship lads)
       4. The ongoing need for faith in God's supernatural plan and growing skepticism of physical machinations is further emphasized. Sarah's sin, according to Calvin, is bound in the fact that "in her fear, she takes the fear of God, the highest of virtues--to degenerate into a fault."[[6]](#footnote-6) Calvin also notes that God is still compassionate in keeping Sarah as the Mother of the Church.
       5. The Last Word: One of my favorite lines occurs here (cue epic music, The Angel of the Lord getting in the last parental word to a child that thought they could get away, "No, but you did laugh." Angel of the Lord walks away slowly, un-phased, to explosions in the background, end scene); God is reminding Sarah--and us, that to continue in a deception is worse and tantamount to no repentance at all! Declare it for what it is and move on.
       6. Calvin's assessment of our skepticism: "But if we thoroughly investigate the source of distrust, we shall find that the reason why we doubt of God's promises is, because we sinfully detract from his power. For as soon as any extraordinary difficulty occurs, then, whatever God has promised, seems to us fabulous; yea, the moment he speaks, the perverse thought insinuates itself, How will he fulfill what he promises? Being bound down, and preoccupied by such narrow thoughts, we exclude his power, the knowledge of which is better to us than a thousand worlds. In short, he who does not expect more from God than he is able to comprehend in the scanty measure of his own reason, does him grievous wrong. Meanwhile, the word of the Lord ought to be inseparably joined with his power; for nothing is more preposterous, than to inquire what God can do, to the setting aside of his declared will."[[7]](#footnote-7) (he goes on to disparage the absurdity in which the Papists debate the absolute Power of God)
  2. What is an essential quality of a leader in the eyes of the Lord? (the power of eavesdropping)
     + 1. Efficiency--the ability to run a well-oiled machine is pretty important…and Abraham seems to have a well-ordered and practiced household such that when thrown into sudden need, all work together to accomplish an honorable goal (Calvin's idea)…but there is an even higher ideal…
       2. Which incites more curiosity: "I have something to tell you"…or "Should I tell him/her?" (the cognitive unrest is practically unbearable)
       3. This scene gains some theological momentum if we reread it realizing that the Lord talks around Abraham…(God does not say what He will do directly…nor gives Abraham advice as to mirror His righteousness!)
       4. God is preparing Abraham, as the chosen father of the Covenant, to lead His People by teaching him *Justice*.
       5. God is also drawing Abraham in naturally as possible as Abe is personally involved (besides local alliances--what else would cause Abraham to have skin in the game of the destruction of Sodom) Abraham, while so esteemed that God tells him of His intent, Abraham has to conclude, wrestle with, and act on what he believes God will do on the basis of what Abraham understands of God's character (humanity's basis for Justice!)
       6. V. 21: God leaves the door open as He investigates prior to meting out judgement. (Good parenting; by the way, does God know what's going on?...Abraham is being revealed God's means of acting justly while being drawn to explore it more completely. A Sovereign and infinite God is stepping into time, and training Abraham to actually exercise Godly leadership (Righteous judgment) before Abraham literally becomes the father of a nation. God is *The* Master Teacher. God is placing Abraham on the horns of a challenging situation:
          1. God uses judgment to keep the evil from further condemning the perpetrators
          2. God uses judgment that the evil may repent (hence recorded for future generations)
          3. Yet God, in His judgment, vindicates righteous causes and defends the weak.
          4. Abraham, by wrestling with what he knows of God's character, appeals to God on this unchanging, perfect, good Standard.
          5. In a word, what does it look like Abraham is doing here? (Praying with his eyes open)
  3. What is prayer's purpose if we serve a Sovereign God?
     + 1. Let's clear the theological air: What was God's initial sovereign plan for Sodom? (destroy it if He didn't find 10 righteous people)

What was God's final plan for Sodom? (destroy it if He didn't find 10 righteous people)

* + - 1. God's Sovereign will did not change. But God cares enough about His People that He:
         1. Reveals enough to Abraham for Abe to wrestle with God revealed to be able to appeal in the first place
         2. Acknowledges the desires of Abraham (an impotent god cannot do this…nor would deign to work with the uncontrollable desires of a lesser being)
         3. Ordains the change/development of His revealed will to Abraham such that Abraham is forced to trust in God's what?--Compassion & Sovereignty, for what good would it do to implore a god incapable of both:

Imagine a god sovereign but unloving (a portrait of a tyrannical parent 🡪 abusive sense of justice; "my way or the highway!")

Imagine a god personal, but not sovereign (a portrait of a "buddy" parent 🡪 Hippie sense of justice; "can't we just all get along?")

Read Martel's **Life of Pi** ch 17. (An unbeliever contrasts Christ with other gods)

* + - 1. In short, God's Sovereignty in light of His Love makes Prayer not only a worthy pursuit--but also an effective one.
      2. Prayer
         1. Charles Hodge declared that “prayer is the converse of the soul with God.”

In and through prayer we express our reverence and adoration for God; we bare our souls in contrite confession before Him; we pour out the thanksgiving of grateful hearts; and we offer our petitions and supplications to Him.

In prayer we experience God as personal and powerful. He can hear us and act in response. The Scripture teaches both the sovereign foreordination of God and the efficacy of prayer. The two are not inconsistent with one another, for God ordains the means as well as the ends for His divine purposes. Prayer is a means God uses to bring His sovereign will to pass.

*Essential Truths of the Christian Faith,* RC Sproul

* + - * 1. Humility: Abraham does not arrogantly presuppose his right to entreat the Lord, he humbly and modestly pleads with the Lord.
        2. Personal and Communal: while Abraham had a very personal incentive to intercede (His Nephew & fam), Calvin is quick to remind us that Abraham was most likely more selfless than we, and adds that the surrounding cities were also in view as he had just rescued them from their oppressors (Chedorlaomer et. al.).
        3. "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" When presented with times when God seems to be angry with all in the situation (Promise of God to wipe away the Earth; David's family situation at its bleakest; Daniel and his friends swept into exile) it "behooves us" Calvin says, to fix our eyes on the end---in which God will inevitably separate the righteous from the wicked.
      1. Why 50? (I don't know…medium-low starting spot?)…but why land on 10?
         1. Knowing Sodom's degree of reprobation (Moses clues us in within a chapter of this) Moses still compassionately believes there may be some concealed.
         2. If he is working with "givens"…he is kind of stuck…but he can begin with a possible 6…Lot, Lot's wife, 2 daughters, 2 fiancées)…surely there are four more in the entire city?!
         3. I'm not sure if he had gone to 5 if the city would have been spared, because Lot's little venture to warn his future son's in law (19:12-14) is met with anything but serious regards for the Lord (but God has plans for Lot…)

Lesson 19

1. **Overview**

On Account of Another's 19 Are people simply either good or bad? (Human complexity and the potent yet limited power of example) Righteousness Where is the Gospel amidst hellfire and brimstone? It's just one little sin…(the incalculable consequences of one sin

1. **Read Genesis 19** (5:43)
2. **Discuss**
   1. Are people simply either good or bad? (Human complexity and the potent yet limited power of example)
      * 1. We, particularly young people, are myopic in our judgment of others. We tend to characterize others in these ways:
           1. Extend the now to the whole, that is, what we see *today* is who they are overall
           2. Weakness: this tends to overlook potentials

the "saint" who can do no wrong (a wise example (LOTR) Galadriel who herself sees what she could become if she took the ring of power from Frodo in Rivendell); Joseph, though perhaps a most stellar biblical example, had his moments.

the "sinner"--seemingly beyond redemption (HARRY POTTER: Rowling so deftly gets you to loathe Professor Snape in the first 6 ½ books…then shows the unlikely sacrifice done out of love for Dumbledore & Lily); the thief on the cross.

This seemed to be a sticking point between Jesus & the religious of His day: the Pharisees who tended to be masters of deception ("whitewashed tombs") and the tax collectors & prostitutes ("closer to the Kingdom than the establishment")

* + - * 1. Limit persons to being one or the other (good or evil)

Ignores human complexity--we are creatures not only capable of change--but inevitably under it as part of the created order.

Conveniently remembers moral categories set up by God, then stiff-arms the doctrine of depravity on one hand and the power and work of the Holy Spirit on the other.

This is where it is important to remember how good it is that God is the ultimate judger of souls.

* + - 1. Lot is quite the mixed bag in this chapter
         1. His best? (most likely the human impact of watching Abraham's example...but it only goes so far)

v. 1 respected in the community ("sitting at the gate") (leadership qualities--albeit of Sodom. See below)

v.3 hospitable

vv7,8 protected guests at risk of own house

v. 14 sought to warn future extended family

* + - * 1. His worst?

"respected in the community (I, for one, wonder what it would take to become respected by such a community)

Put virgin daughters and future extended family at risk to protect guests. (What about going outside yourself and protecting both? I am pretty sure no eastern tradition trumps a believer marrying a believer in the purest way possible)

Future sons in law did not take Lot seriously (I can only guess this may have been the fruit of Lot's own example of not taking the covenant seriously)

v. 16 "but he lingered there"--Angels had to literally drag them out of Sodom (most likely because he had significant wealth there--probably also a clue to his high standing mentioned earlier--alongside Abe's rescuing Sodom in ch 14)

19-22 pleads to compromise the life-saving directives from the Angels (and, by extension, the Lord). This will come back to bite him.

* 1. Where is the Gospel amidst hellfire and brimstone?
     + 1. First of all, God is true to His Word. We often don't like when we read about God bringing judgement--but consider the flipside: if He is inconsistent with His promises of wrath--He must be inconsistent with His promises of Mercy. Imagine trying to live under such a god--capricious with his grace (this only compounds the pain and confusion).
       2. Evidently there were not 10 righteous in the city. Imagine that for a moment. It is doubtful that a sizeable city today does not have 10 righteous in it…even "Sin City"!
       3. While we are right to distance the gospel from any who would merely broadcast the "fire & brimstone" message for shock value alone, it is present here in an unexpected way--rescue of one due to regard of another.
       4. Twice God goes out of His way to remind us that Lot was not saved for his own sake but because of faithful Abraham (14:1-16) and here (19:29). What is more Gospel that being saved through the faithfulness of another? Abraham is a good archetype of Christ in this way.
       5. A word on the calamity: while it is completely possible that God destroyed the city supernaturally, it is not necessary to be dogmatic about it (plate tectonics and sulfur/bitumen deposits found near the Dead sea suggest potential secondary causes as well--as long as one does not simply explain it away as mere nature at work--why? The tone of the text overwhelmingly cites God as the cause of the disaster--but, as much of life testifies, it pleases God to work through what He has made so that what is natural can participate in the divine. If pressed, is there any process in the universe that does its work apart from God?
       6. There is little discussion as to why Lot left Zoar--the town he so desperately wanted to flee towards while leaving Sodom. The chemist side of me wants to take the details of what Abraham sees in verses 27 & 28 as a description of the natural outcome of burning Sulfur: SO2 (sulfur dioxide gas). This, incidentally, when breathed in reacts with the water in our respiratory system to make H2SO4--sulfuric acid and wreak havoc by burning one from the inside out. I would venture to guess part of the reason Lot fled Zoar had to do with the lingering fumes.
       7. A word on Mrs. Lot: Pastor Derek Thomas has his to say:

"the calcification of Lot’s wife teaches us the lesson Jesus reinforced: that those who attempt to save their lives in this world will lose it: “Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.”([Luke 17:32–33](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2017.32%E2%80%9333)). Her lusting for a city doomed to destruction by God showed that she had lost sight of God entirely, blinded by the allurement of the big city.

I find it interesting that Christ Himself points to Lot's wife as an object lesson of how not to be. It reminds me of when he said the sobering words, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and **looks** **back** is fit for the kingdom of God.” [Luke 9:62](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9:62&version=ESV)

It underscores the notion that our faith is demonstrative in how we obey and it wasn't merely the action of turning and looking, but longing for things incapable of saving and sustaining us. This sentiment was echoed by Moses as the children of Israel longed for Egypt and was an important and graphic visual for their wandering hearts.

* 1. It's just one little sin…(the incalculable consequences of one sin
     + 1. Well…there are actually three towards the end of this chapter, but I place the bulk of the blame on Lot. Drunkenness becomes the straw that breaks the camel's back…and the gate through which he had to step in order to bring about the lurid catastrophe that follows.
       2. Pastor Steven Cole says this about the consequences: "Lot’s sin spread to his daughters. So did his fears. He feared staying in Zoar; they feared that they wouldn’t find husbands. But isn’t it interesting that nobody feared the Lord, in spite of what they had just witnessed with regard to Sodom! The older daughter, who should have been an example, instead led her younger sister into sin (19:31). The result was Moab and Ammon, two perpetual enemies of Israel. Moab’s king would later hire Balaam who counseled them to seduce Israelite men with their women (Numbers 25). The Ammonites worshiped a god named “Molech.” Part of their religious devotion involved sacrificing their children to their god by throwing them into a raging fire. Israel itself was judged by God for following this detestable practice. "To follow this up, the sins of these nations is described biblically as going on for "10 generations", a Hebrew literary phrase suggesting, in many cases, a much longer period of time. Ouch.
       3. Lot took no initiative to find wives for his children (once again more concerned about himself than his/their legacy) and so they took it upon themselves to ensure descendants. It is important to note that the Moabites and Ammonites were not rejected by God because of their questionable lineage but because of their mistreatment of Israel (disregard for the covenant). It is also noteworthy that Ruth, eventually counted amongst the tribe of Judah and in the lineage of Christ, was a Moabitess (Ruth 4)--scandalous when you think about it\*. God oft seeks to upend our sanctified notions of Who the Messiah ought to be.
       4. Is it just me or does drunkenness seem underrated in our society? God has now made it responsible for preserving the Ham's line (Canaanite nations at war with Shem & Japheth's descendants) and thousands of Israelites sacrificed in war and infanticide. I wonder if we would do better as the church to bring attention to this particular sin. I am guessing this may be partly why Paul brings such attention to operating under the Spirit's control in the NT. We are fleshly enough when in control--drunkenness unbridles this human "restraint" and reveals much of whom we are and the evils of which we are capable.

\*It is important to note that, although she carried the stigma of being a Moabitess (cf. Deut 23:3 -prohibition from entering the Temple), she was not a *practicing* Moabitess and so, in the words of Dr, Sproul, "she gets a pass" in referencing David's ability to enter the Temple despite his being part Moabite by birth.

Lesson 20

1. **Overview**

What. Again? 20 The Necessity of being on the Team to understand the Coach's Game plan (How can readers studying the same passage arrive at such disparate conclusions?)

A lesson through a Pagan (Checking in with the Covenant: Salvation is from Whom?)

How should those without the law know better?

What? Riches again? (The making of a Near Eastern settlement)

1. **Read Genesis 20** (2:53)
2. **Discuss**
   1. The Necessity of being on the Team to understand the Coach's Game plan
      1. While we would agree that even those hostile to the Gospel are capable of general truths/worldly wisdom, it still behooves us to discern carefully what we believe through the whole of Scripture.
         * 1. Some critical scholars regard this account a duplicate of the events of chapter 12 on the grounds that a man does not repeat an offense of this kind. (Kidner 137, Genesis commentary)
           2. To this Kidner rebuts

In theory this may sound convincing, but Abraham believed he was under the threat of death.

V.13 reveals that this was Abraham's default policy when entering pagan cultures (Kidner 137-8, Genesis commentary)

* + 1. There is a 'fuller orbed" understanding that the Spirit grants in regard to spiritual things--unseen or misunderstood by unsaved minds.
       - 1. The Spirit convicts me to add the sobering reminder that, while we cast a judgmental eye towards Abraham, we are quicker to hurry towards patterned sin than we realize--even egregious sins.
         2. God is reiterating the depth of our sin and the deeper depth of His rescue. It is a tacit recognition of our depravity and constant need for a Saviour.
  1. A lesson through a Pagan (Checking in with the Covenant: Salvation is from Whom?)
     1. Abraham was promised Isaac a year out--surely Abraham knew he was on the brink of bearing the promise (or what he considered the "Promise")…in other words, Abe puts in jeopardy the program of redemption as promised by God. (Did the reprehensible nature of Sarai's danger settle in Abe's heart? Would the son born to him come from a pagan king? Is that even possible?)
     2. Here we see a more forthright intervention from God as He communicates directly with Abimelech in a dream.
     3. Abimelech Argues rightly in regards to his misdemeanor, if you will. Calvin reminds us well:

[Abimelech] does not arrogate to himself a purity which is altogether spotless; but only denies that he was led by lust, either tyrannically or purposely, to abuse another man's wife. **We know how great is the difference between a crime and a fault**; [2](http://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=clvn&b=1&c=20" \l "_fnf2) thus Abimelech does not exempt himself from every kind of charge, but only shows that he had been conscious of no such wickedness as required this severe punishment. The 'simplicity of heart,' of which he speaks, is nothing else than that ignorance which stands opposed to consciousness of guilt; and 'the righteousness of his hands,' is nothing but that self government, by which men abstain from force and acts of injustice. Besides, the interrogation which Abimelech used proceeded from a common feeling of religion. For nature itself dictates, that God preserves a just discrimination in inflicting punishments.

* 1. How should those without the law know better?
     1. If we take Calvin's meaning here--one cannot help but see the hierarchy which emerges in regards to knowledge and justice. This discussion is worth having because it actually affects the church more than it does the unchurched!
     2. What does it mean? Allow me to thread the needle here:
        + 1. You may have heard it said "All sins are equal in the sight of God"--probably from a well-meaning pastor or youth leader. Historically I see it as a reaction by Protestants against the Roman Catholic distinction between mortal sins (sins that kill justifying grace) and venial sin (sins of a lesser nature that do not kill justifying grace) but this is not the sentiment of Scripture. The past scene is precisely one of those moments. Allow me to clarify:

Note: this was not a prohibition vs. all judging… it is a disease we must deal with; discerning and confronting sin is necessary to preserve the peace and purity of the Body of Christ

* + - * 1. While all sins condemn (there are no "white sins" or infractions against God's law/character that He simply overlooks (lest we cheapen both the Cross of Christ *and* the Grace given), not all sins are equal--some are more grave than others.
        2. Support: Making sense of Scripture:

“ 3"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the **speck** out of your eye,' when all the time there is a **plank** in your own eye? 5You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. .” Matthew 7:3-5

“He who has handed me over to you has committed the greater sin.” John 19:11

Certain sins in the law (certain sexual sins, idolatry, funding the church by deplorable means) are distinguished in a particular context as an abomination to God (e.g. Lev. 18:22; Deut. 7:25, Deut. 23:18, Isa. 41:24).

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is set apart as a more severe sin than blasphemy of the Son (Matt. 12:31)

14If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. 15I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

Christ often evaluates the sin of the Pharisees as greater than the sins of others. You strain out a gnat while you swallow a camel (Matt. 23:24). If all sins are equal, Christ’s rebuke does not make any sense. (See also Luke 20:46-47)

Similarly, Christ also talked about the “weightier things of the law” (Matt. 23:23).

* + - * 1. Support: Experience

Do we live like this?--because if God does…we should! (Considering we ought to regard evil as God regards evil).

1) What if I punished my children equally for radically different crimes (eg. Do I place my son on death row for coming home late? If one were to murder someone, God forbid, would I merely ground them or take away their phone?)

2) What if the church meted out the same sentence no matter the infraction? (Would church discipline work if a Session treated an isolated sin the same as a repeated, unrepentant, living in sin?)

ii. WSC Q&A 150/151

Q. 150. Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves, and in the sight of God?

All transgressions of the law of God are not equally heinous; but some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

3. What Calvin was saying was that God takes knowledge into account when meting out justice. Abimelech's not knowing Sarah was Abraham's wife is key to God's mercy here. Adultery was considered a heinous sin by Ancient Near Eastern culture--and so Abimelech does not view what could have been lightly.

* 1. What? Riches again? (The making of a Near Eastern settlement)
     1. Abraham is given great blessing here:
        + 1. A Title of honor: Prophet: first use in Scripture; carries with it the (un)enviable privilege of receiving revelation from God and interceding on behalf of other people.
          2. Riches: Abimelech gives gifts to Abe (male head of the family) less out of guilt but more to vindicate himself and Sarai's name; one cannot help but imagine that the fear instilled by God's pending judgement (barrenness) was a significant motivator. Fear of God can take a few forms; also, this vindication is a tacit recognition that Abimelech is not the father of Isaac.
          3. A land in which to dwell: while it is Abimelech who offers land and safety in which Abe can settle, it is God who rescues His people from plunging the Promise into the command of a pagan culture (on the brink of Isaac's birth)
        1. God's mercy and blessing despite our sin is in view here and a pertinent reminder any day as to how gracious God is. Oh to mirror such grace!!
           1. What seems more profound than the logical "obedience leads to blessing" is God's kindness to Abraham through Abraham's "disobedience turned to blessing." It demonstrates that God's over-arching promise to Abraham ("I will bless those who bless you") being worked out even before the arrival of Isaac.
           2. And, even more profoundly, before Abraham's obedience--(Did God not say salvation belongs to the Lord?) Abraham--even as a law-bound Hebrew, was not to misunderstand that His salvation was through God alone.

Lesson 21

1. **Overview**

Barren No More 21 What does obedient action look like in response to God's perfect timing?

Keeping promises even when it hurts (We serve a Promise-keeping God)

Marriage as a reflection of our values

A formidable people (God's blessing and the making of a Near Eastern treaty)

1. **Read Genesis 21** (4:40)
2. **Discuss**
   1. What does obedient action look like in response to God's perfect timing?
      1. Notice that the coming of the promise (or, better yet, what Abraham believes to be the Promise) is accompanied by rejoicing on many levels:
         * 1. Abraham names his son Isaac (Hebrew "he laughs")
           2. Parent's experience at this age gives rise to its own quizzical humor.
           3. Sarah finds joy in the likely reaction of observers.
           4. Sarah's near-lifelong bout with barrenness is not lost on her as she boasts "Yet I have borne him a son (miracle 1) in his old age (miracle 2)."
           5. Marking significant life-milestones with celebration (feast of weaning). Just as life itself is to be celebrated, traditions centered around markers in one's life become a means by which indelible memories can make unparalleled impressions on family. Don't agree? Just look back…what do you remember most fondly from your past--I'll bet anything it is intimately tied with family traditions (holiday, birthday, vacation).
         1. Abraham & Sarah already demonstrated obedience in merely trying to have a child at their age (in other words, with fertile intent), but the noteworthy and Spiritual headship demonstrated by Abraham giving Isaac the "recently" inaugurated sign of the covenant just as God prescribed is a direct result (and a harbinger of) his belief/faith in God.
         2. Put points 1 and 2 above together and it is easier to be agree with the Psalmist that God "[Prepares] a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Ps. 23:5,6
         3. As an aside; while leading a family spiritually sounds like a simple task if all are believers--it does not take long for even heroes of the faith to falter. Moses himself neglected to circumcise his son according to the law (ironically, rabbi's in Jesus' day, Jesus Himself and theologians today call it the 'law of Moses'). Exodus 4: 24-26 is a simple passage to read but a difficult passage to square with the character of God--unless you understand the seriousness with which God regards covenant obedience. (For a fuller understanding, I have included Ra Mclaughlin's answer on Third Millennium Ministriues' website).[[8]](#footnote-8)
   2. Keeping promises even when it hurts (We serve a Promise-keeping God)
      1. So all is well…until, of all things, someone laughs. Wait? Oh…you mean we can use an emotion for evil as much as we can for good? Yup. This time it is Ishmael--a teenager by now (he was 13 when circumcised and Isaac was promised). One can only imagine how sensitive Sarah may have been--after all, Isaac was their true son and Ishmael's age and tie to Hagar all but represented a threat to Isaac's legacy which, from a human perspective, seemed as helpless and fragile as his toddler-state.
      2. Sarah's plan seems excellent from the perspective of protecting Isaac's future, but there is a fly in the ointment: Ishmael is Abe's buy birth and Sarah's by near-eastern tradition (though she seems willing to abandon all claim to him as if discarding a once-loved garment).
      3. God quickly steps in and addresses the very pain Abraham was experiencing (Moses' wording is not without purpose). This seems a strange act for a God so interested in preserving human life--particularly for the sake of others (namely Abe) and yet, we realize that God is more than capable of sustaining a fractured family unit in the wilderness--especially if He approves.
      4. God comforts Abraham by promising to bless Ishmael precisely because he is Abraham's son (for as best we can see, Scripture actually does a convincing job of revealing the apostate nature of Ishmael's career. (Once again, I have included Third Millennium Ministries answer to this question, so expertly discussed by Dr. Nally, Jr.)[[9]](#footnote-9)
      5. Now to address the elephant in the room: What impact ought this have on the first hearers of this recorded story? After all, they were in the wilderness…and heirs of the child of Promise to boot!. If he provided for
   3. Marriage as a reflection of our values
      1. This whole scene where Hagar gives up then discovers that the God of Abraham as personal and compassionate is the backdrop for a very telling unbelief.

2. Scripture is so fascinatingly consistent that it typically pairs words with action and permits us, over the long haul of people’s lives to observe the confluence or departure of their words and their actions. In other words, while a confession of any belief is important, it is the fruit that bears out whether the words/motives/faith was genuine. It is the context from which R.C. Sproul says “it is not the profession but the possession of faith that is in view” (Sproul, 2017 Ligonier Conference Q&A). This is consistent with Jesus’ own teaching that it is through love and borne fruit that anyone will know whether they are His disciples.

3. God, despite not only a lack of faith in one’s own ability (default setting for the world) but also a lack of faith in God’s promise to Abraham (as surely Abe comforted Hagar & Ishmael through tears that His God would sustain them; king amongst awkward moments to be sure) still makes good on His promise.

4. God provides again for Hagar & Ishmael—as none other than “El Roi”\_the God who sees and causes her eyes to be opened to see the well. The spiritual goings on here scream mercy, grace, provision, I care for you in a personal way because this is the second time I have rescued you kind of way and still…

5. Hagar makes no significant declaration as she did in ch 16 and even the phrasing of verse 20 is worded in a typically pagan manner (“God was on the boy’s side”).

6. The proof of Hagar’s (& Ishmael’s) unbelief/disregard for the covenant? Who he marries.

7. You can tell a great deal of the spiritual maturity of someone by who they choose to marry. Hagar, in complete disregard for the”God who sees,” is somehow under the impression that He is not looking when she decides to procure a wife for Ishmael from Egypt—not a bastion of covenantal children. This spiritual assessment is consistent with Paul’s when he compares the unsaved as under the law as “sons of the slave woman” (Hagar) and believers as “sons of the Promise” (the Jerusalem Above; Sarah—the free woman). This became a heated point of friction for Paul as even a casual reading of Acts reveals his ongoing conflict with those still bound by the law. Paul’s argument leading up to His offensive declaration against the Judaizers in Galatians 5 is strengthened by his appeal to Abraham’s wives and sons as it reaches to the heart of conflict: slavery vs. freedom. (I also find it ironic that slavery would have been the overriding (& offensive) impression on Genesis 21’s first hearers as Hagar found Ishmael a spouse from the land of their recent captors!

D. A formidable people (God's blessing and the making of a Near Eastern treaty)

1. The blessing of God (even with now one child) is not lost on the nations surrounding him. Note that Abimelech (most likely the same that Abe swindled then prayed for before) approaches Abraham this time.

2. The memory of God’s curse is brought to light immediately as Abimelech pleads with Abraham not to harm his land or his people (a thorough and good leader) as long as Abraham dwells there. Note that Abimelech’s case is strengthened by the testimony of his character until now. In a word, character matters—especially over the long haul. Don’t expect mercy and friendship if you do not have a history of integrity and honor.

3. Abraham uses this opportunity to bring up a potential bit of contention and, probably not wishing to upset the pomegranate cart, Abimelech responds with genuine innocence (sounds familiar). So Abraham relents and the two experience a righteous treaty, Jehovah-style. Abimelech is so taken aback that he asks what the seven sheep could possible mean—and Abraham, as swiftly and simply as ever could be done, mirrors the graciousness of His God and furthermore flummoxes the worldly with the “perfect” gift: a complete “sacrifice.” (I do not believe that the number and species were done by accident).

4. He does it again: Abraham celebrates the success of the day with another occasion—this time by planting a tree and worshipping the Lord. It would be a day to remember for generations to come. (After all—it is even being remembered by 21st century Americans thousands of miles and years removed!) Now that’s a monument. The tree is long gone—but the testimony of a gracious God still stands!

5. I love how the chapter ends. Simple and soothing—like a cup of pumpkin spiced latte on a crisp fall day: “Abraham lived in Philistine country for a long time.”

Lesson 22

1. **Overview**

When God Comes to Call 22 What kind of a God bids His chief mouthpiece to kill his own son? (Making sense of this from any other

perspective…)

Keeping promises even when it hurts (Perspectives on Abe & Isaac)

An Archetype of Christ (the Gospel as vivid as one could portray)

A Good Word at the Right Time (Reiteration of the Covenant)

1. **Read Genesis 22** (4:12)
2. **Discuss**
3. What kind of a God bids His chief mouthpiece to kill his own son? (Making sense of this from any other perspective…)
   * 1. There is a sense in which this passage hit me anew upon becoming Reformed that has very much affected how it is that I regard it, however, no offence is meant to those who belong to a non-reformed protestant background.
     2. I grew up considering this passage to be a test, albeit a highly awkward one--and difficult to explain (especially the occasional unbeliever with just enough biblical exposure to be familiar with the event (which, for all practical purposes, sticks out like a character flaw thumb in the presence of the familiar "God of love" description oft referenced by said limited biblical literacy)

Why?

* + - * 1. The passage says so! (verse 1)

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” Genesis 22:1

* + - * 1. The widest evangelical circle I had come to know had no other framework in which to couch it and (through no fault of their own) focused on the endpoint of the story as it took a rather uncomfortable notion (God bidding Abe to kill his promised heir) quickly to its more easily swallowed Christian notion (God providing a lamb).
        2. Yet something still nagged…
    1. Upon becoming Reformed, further study of the Covenant revealed a richness and comprehensible motive behind God's test--in other words, the test now had a wider explanatory power that made the redemptive endpoint all the more meaningfully beautiful. While a non-Covenantal view still can give the main thrust of the passage weight (& due treatment), it misses out on a much weightier and poignant context for the profundity of the event for generations to come--even us!

1. Keeping promises even when it hurts (Perspectives on Abe & Isaac)
2. What was God doing? Could he have tested Abraham in a more "civil" manner?
   1. God was doing no more than calling humanity's debt due. There is no need to overstate or stammeringly justify God's demand. There is also no need to underplay it and seek to explain it away as a mere test (which raises a more fundamental question of to what purpose--did God not know Abe's heart, etc.).
   2. The Covenant--as we have been highlighting all throughout Genesis, readily explains this chapter well. In fact, one could practically say that those who had been selected as covenant representatives at its various stages could/should have expected god to come knocking at their door. God had come--and the God-given child of Promise, Abe's *only* son (God's language, not mine; v. 12) was making good on the promised price of conquering sin & death (Satan per Genesis 3:15).
   3. The sacrificial system gave both a context for covenant payment (blood of an innocent) as well as a glaring inadequacy (it was a regularly repeated event). When God came to Abraham, I almost wonder whether Abraham knew the weight of what being called the Promised child meant. I cannot help but wonder whether Isaac could see the hidden emotion in his father's eyes as dad taught him the significance and hands on performance of the family sacrifices.
   4. What can be learned about Abraham?

He understood--yet did not hesitate. (v. 3)

3So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

He took the responsibility of bearing the weight of portending sadness and loss without unloading/preparing his son. Abraham spared Isaac the agony of a three day plus journey under immense, practically unequaled, emotional pressures. (As an aside--this was a luxury Jesus did not share. He volunteered before the foundation of time to bear the weight of the Father's wrath justly deserved by man). (I am richly reminded of a central theme of Benigni's 1997 Italian film "Life Is Beautiful.")

Abraham's faith--boasted elsewhere in Scripture, emerges in stark clarity as Isaac asks where the sacrificial lamb might be and Abraham answers--not sheepishly, but with confidence: “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” (v. 8)

This is where the systematic study of Scripture is indispensable. It also gives us a handy hermeneutical principle: "Use the clearer portions of Scripture to interpret those less clear" If there was any wonder how Abraham was feeling at this time, the New Testament writes have some amazing things to say:

**20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. James 2**

**17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. Hebrews 11**

I would be remiss to not mention two things in regard to Abraham & Isaac. Isaac's willingness to comply speaks quite highly of two things:

Abraham's faithfulness to taking his patriarchal job seriously (teaching even the most uncomfortable and graphic aspects of the covenant to his future descendant and patriarch)

Isaac's regard for the Covenant; Isaac, if I am not mistaken, is a young man and fully capable of resisting any effort of Abraham (now over 110 years old) to subdue him against his will. Isaac's complying with (perhaps even assisting him in readying himself for sacrifice-- full range of appropriate emotions notwithstanding) God's command shows a spiritual understanding of God unable to be embraced through human wisdom.

1. An Archetype of Christ (the Gospel as vivid as one could portray)
   * + 1. Christological references just fall from the page in this passage (after all--this is meant to be the clearest portrait of the sacrifice of the long-awaited Promise until He actually arrives in the early chapters of the Gospels).
       2. Isaac is given the wood and the father carries the fire and the knife. Theologian Derek Kidner reminds us that this parallels nicely the cross (borne by Christ) and judgement (in the hands of and exacted by the Father).
       3. The notion of a three day journey seems purposeful to me. A patriarchal reference similar to the "sign of Jonah" Christ uses to reference n old familiar story in which three days was quite significant.
       4. The fact that Abraham believed that Isaac would walk back with him to reunite with his mom is supernaturally paralleled by the God the Father's own promise to the God the Son to "not permit Him to see corruption." This, in no small manner, becomes the apologetic by which the resurrection of all believers is justified and guaranteed. Paul makes this practically his monolithic message wherever and whenever he can. Why? Here's a hint: contrast how he vs. the other Apostles met Christ. (I borrow this from Dr. Ravi Zacharias).
       5. God, then, experiences grief that Abraham was not designed to bear--this is where the analogy loses its parallels but gains new strength: The Father had no "ram in the thicket" of Golgotha and the Son no substitute to drink the Cup and die in His place. God's grief and sacrifice are of infinite value here--and this is not lost as a common term in the book of Hebrews regarding Christ is "better."
2. A Good Word at the Right Time (Reiteration of the Covenant)

**13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. (v. 13)**

* + - 1. More comforting words had never been spoken. It is interesting to note that God chooses the angel of the LORD to do this--once again, most likely a theophany of Christ himself: adding poignancy to the scene. Consider this: here the Lamb tells a lamb that his son's sacrifice is not necessary, but another (namely Himself) will die in Isaac's place to secure a new Estate for humanity and victory over sin and death.
      2. The overwhelming joy the two of them exchanged must have been as rejoicingly vigorous as the paralysis of grief would have been prior to the Angel's pronouncement.
      3. The very land there would bear the name "the LORD will provide" (Jehovah-Jireh).
      4. Despite the nearness of the emotion of the moment, God lovingly reassures Abraham of the wider covenant by reiterating it. It is interesting to note that in this moment of Redemptive import, God reminds Abraham of the purpose for sparing Isaac--to make Abraham great nation. One cannot help but see how this promise buoyed him to embrace the necessary-resurrection of Isaac if things went south on the mountain that day.
      5. The list of names at the end of the story are a seemingly odd addition--even insulting on the surface perhaps as the generations listed are the successes of his brother Nahor, but keep this in mind;
         1. Abraham would most likely rejoice in the growth of his extended family (they were his relatives as well)
         2. A recognizable name pops up that sets up nicely the next patriarchal narrative of Genesis and ties the significance of this event with a future generation (Promise realized…)

Lesson 23

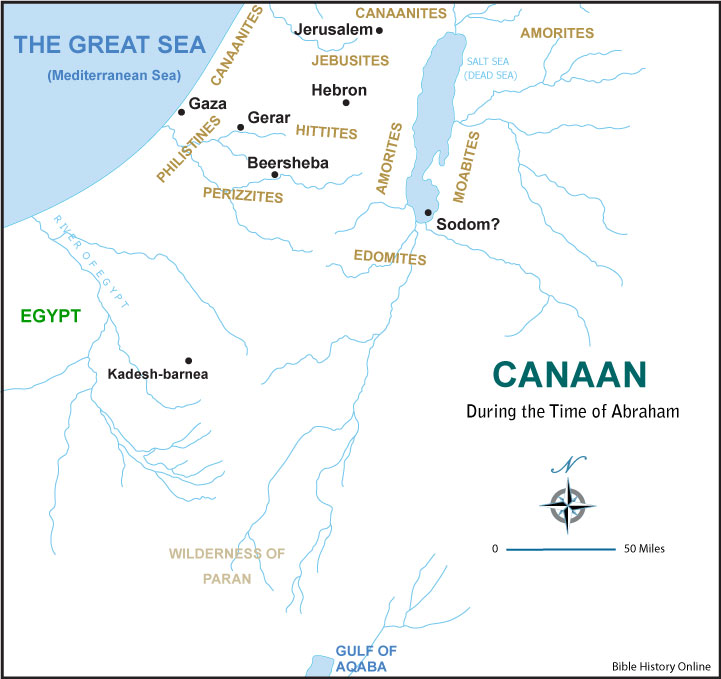
1. **Overview**

We Pay for What We Care For 23 Everything in its season (A contrast to the rejoicing of last chapter)

A Shrewd Business (When oppression is disguised as generosity)

Bringing the Covenant Promise around to the third and near-final stage…

1. **Read Genesis 23** (2:48)
2. **Discuss**
   1. Everything in its season
      1. As last chapter began with great rejoicing, this one begins with the death of one whom God calls "princess."
      2. Verse 2 gives us pause to note two things: Sarah died in Canaan and Abraham expressly took time to mourn for her.
      3. All eyes were on Abraham as the surrounding Canaanites saw some things in stark contrast to how they viewed death.
         * 1. Surely the mourning aspects would have been expected and, in fact, shared as loss is something all humans face--however, Abraham is counted amongst the righteous who live by faith and those who mourn but do not mourn without hope.
           2. The severity with which Abraham could morn for a spouse he loved close to 100 years was matched by the reality of hope Abraham held out for his wife, namely that he would see her again someday (as he had Isaac last chapter). This juxtaposition of such differing emotions would have only served to make the unique nature of believing in the covenant all the more obvious and strange.
   2. A Shrewd Business (When oppression is disguised as generosity)
      1. Because of the oft veiled and back and forth nature of ancient Near-Eastern bartering, it is challenging to interpret what exactly the intentions of the participants during the deal, but we can surmise within reason and find a likely interpretation.
      2. Abraham seems to have gained a prominent enough place that he was being taken seriously at the gate (ancient near-Eastern place of business). Abraham seeks to purchase a plot of land in order to bury Sarah and so he approaches the locals in order to procure a specific location and finds a few things there that make the deal more difficult:
         1. Abraham, though blessed by God, recognizes his foreign status amongst the Hittites (sojourner and foreigner). Theologian Kidner states that this could still afforded him a standing in the land (especially with his God and wealth)--but with certain legal restrictions (Immigration laws, if you will).
         2. The flattery heaped upon Abraham ("a mighty prince") seems to be less a tacit recognition of his true title and one of buttered preparation for the banter to occur. The Hittites offer him what appears to be a sweet deal--but may be simply the language of Hittite salesmanship. There is a third thing too here in the mix--the first offer by the Hittites speaks of tombs--and hints at the possibility of Abraham paying a dear price for a tomb…but who amongst them would be willing to offer Abraham, a foreigner, a permanent foothold in the land.
         3. But, over and against this, they knew they could get the highest price for the choicest of sites/tombs and the price would automatically rise with the import and emergency of the purchase --in other words, they had two things going for them: Abraham loved his wife (they saw that in v. 2) and he *desperately* needed a burial place.
         4. Perhaps Abraham, sensing this cultural bias in conflict with his desire to claim a miniature portion of the promise, offers a full price up front and wisely dismisses an offer from the group (who can unify to stave off a foreigner with an unspecified sum) to deal with an individual owner. Kidner reminds us that this perceptive switch from a foreigner-resenting group to individual owner who may welcome a paying customer demonstrates Abraham's business skill. As stated earlier--do not forget Abraham's apparent love for Sarah (a compelling motive to pay any price) and purchasing this choice plot in the Promise land also guaranteed a place for descendants to both honor and bury their closest loved ones.
         5. In this gambit, Abraham bids that they entreat Ephron on his behalf to consider selling him a particular plot in a particular location, with a particular feature (a cave--which, quite naturally, acted as a "prefab' tomb for as long as these cultures had existed).
   3. Bringing the Covenant Promise around to the third and near-final stage…
      * 1. Ephron, the land-owner with whom Abraham wanted to do business, happened to be within earshot and, once again, approached it in similar style to his people and offered Abraham an initial easy way out for both to benefit. Remember, Ephron now knew Abraham was willing to pay a hefty sum but could be held to less than ownership rights if he simply gave him the land with the cave.
        2. Some theologians believe that Ephron's seemingly generous offer was an attempt to reduce the negotiations and oblige Abraham to counter with an even more generous sum (the notion of "raising the pot" was central to Near-Eastern deals a sentiment largely lost on Western capitalism!)
        3. Abraham does little to prolong the deal and so offers the price without hesitation. Ephron seems to contradict himself as he casually throws out an exorbitant price and schmoozingly follows with "what is that between you and me". Ephron knows that this is a crazy sum (400 shekels--practically 24 times the sum Jeremiah pays for a plot of land generations later; Reformation Study Bible, notes on v. 15), but appeals to Abraham's wealth and new standing as a potential land-owner to all but seal the "bargain."
        4. Abraham, as he counts out the sum, cannot help but think to himself how God is slowly bringing to Him the Covenant Promise of a great nation--I have been promised a child and future legacy (check), I have been promised wealth (check) and now I own a small slice of the Promised land--a place where My People shall be gathered for generations to come! (check!).



Lesson 24

1. **Overview**

I, Isaac Take You, Rebekah 24 The Righteous Shall Live By Faith (Living a Life of Trust)

Principles to Date By (Gen 24 as it relates to the West)

A Changing of the Guard (Abraham bequeaths the Patriarchy)

1. **Read Genesis 24** (10:26)
2. **Discuss**
   1. The Righteous Shall Live By Faith (Living a Life of Trust)
      1. It is interesting to note that Moses reiterates for Abraham's continued days what the end of the last chapter suggests--that Abraham was blessed by God. It is not much unlike a "Previously in the Life of Abraham" segment in which Arc-based programs clue the viewer into important aspects that set up the next episode. God is about to take the Abrahamic story to the next level.
      2. Verses 2&3 are easily sped over as they are quite awkward to our western ears--but in Ancient Near-Eastern oath-making, this makes complete--if not poignant sense. (explained below)
      3. How do we know Abraham trusts this servant? Remember Eliezer of Damascus from chapter 15?
         * 1. Abraham assumed him as his patriarchal heir to the Lord when God came to Covenant with him. This is no light thing. Do you have a friend to whom you could bequeath your entire family and estate? The closest western relationship I can muster in regards to this is the notion of "God-parent" in a case where both parents died.
           2. The vulnerability demonstrated by having a grown man's hand on one's thigh (the "underthigh" to boot) is trusting.
           3. A word on this...ahem, method:

I suppose it goes without mentioning--it is quite memorable to boot.

But the real significance is that it is ever so close to the cause of human patriarchal lineage, An oath done in this way would have a drastic effect on the future family line and thus was symbolically associated with the area--namely, the loins. (Dads, imagine doing this with your sons…"Place your hand under my thigh… (Pause. A long, awkward pause) …Now, promise me you will take a bride from the Body of Christ rather than from the pagan society in which we live…")

* + - * 1. He entrusts (see the very nature of the word itself?) his future legacy in the discerning hands of Eliezer.
    1. It is fascinating to note that Abraham's departure from his own homeland and Father's people have left him in an estate to make this the only other stipulation: Do not take my son from me. Eliezer, in methodological genius, covers some bases and seeks counsel from Abraham. This is quite realistic (Dads, imagine again--this time having to simply send your daughter to a foreign place to create a new life as her husbands')--not so easy.
    2. Also--one cannot help but mention the power of God's promise at work alongside Abraham's emotional past--God promised *this* land to him…and *so* it must be played out and settled. I love when God aligns experiential conviction with faith-based decision-making. It is as if Abraham's way is clearer because he was dually (&duly) prepared to make it so! Also--don't fall into the trap that one emotion is strictly secular and the other (seemingly based on God's promise) sacred. Both can clearly be used for God's glory--and God is unafraid to combine perspectives to bring about His holy will. It is interesting rto note that Abraham's lesson with seeking to fulfill the Covenant on one's own (eg. with Hagar) has also deeply affected Abraham's sensitivity to rely on God's provision.)

“Chances are, if you marry somebody in violation with your parents’ will, I suggest you are playing a dangerous game with God. I just say this very plainly to you, young people: Be immensely careful when you make the pledge of your life to somebody if your parents are not in sympathy with it, particularly so if your parents are men and women who love God.”

Ravi Zacharias

* 1. Principles to Date By (Gen 24 as it relates to the West) (these are borrowed--much like the title of this lesson, from Dr. Ravi Zacharias' message, I, Isaac, Take You Rebekah"[[10]](#footnote-10)

Before I go too far, do not take verse 14 to suggest asking God for a sign when "spouse-searching." Eliezer's use here is not only appropriate--but common for extending the Messianic line ("and this shall be a sign" of Isaiah conjures up this notion again).

* + 1. SUBMISSION TO & RELIANCE UPON the WISDOM of PARENTS
       - 1. “A trusted servant and a godly parent were involved in the selection process."

“Love is as much a question of the will as it is of the emotions and if you will to love somebody, you can."

Ravi Zacharias

* + - * 1. What responsibility does this place upon you as parents?

East meets West: Dr. Zacharias & his brother

What can we learn? (see inset left)

* + - * 1. “Chances are, if you marry somebody in violation to your parent’s will, you are playing a dangerous game with God." (see inset right)
        2. Is it ever appropriate to act against the will of your parents in regards to marriage? What does Dr. Zacharias suggest to do in such cases?

(see inset below)

“And that’s why — please hear me — when you come to that pivotal moment of decision, my suggestion to you is seek the advice of somebody you love and respect and don’t try to do it on your own just because you have the romantic feelings. Get the wisdom of your minister, the wisdom of your parents, the wisdom of friends and realize that romance has to be transcended by a strong will and a degree of commitment to you.”

Ravi Zacharias

* + - * 1. Reflections on what makes a marriage last…
    1. KINDNESS OUGHT TO BE A DEFINING FEATURE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE YOU GET ROMANTIC
       - 1. Note some examples of Rebekah's kindness…
         2. “There is never a reason to be unkind.” (see inset right)
         3. Keep pursuing your spouse. "Romantic Entropy"

d. What does it mean to “go the extra mile?” Examples of kindness:

Fiction

“And I want to go so far as to say there is never a reason to be unkind. There may be reasons to disagree. There may be reasons to struggle; after all, two wills are merging into one. There are constant compromises and surrenders, but there is never a reason to be unkind…. Young people, this is the moment in your life — please hear me — when he who is wooing you will be at his kindest. And if you do not see that kindness in that person, watch out. For that partnership will be nourished and nurtured on the basis of a love that is not arrogant, but a love that is kind.”

Ravi Zacharias

History

Scripture

Spouse

* + - 1. A word on sensitivity:

If you were in a given situation where you found yourself feeling depressed and you didn’t know why…and you could choose between two reactions, which would you choose:

A friend to come and fix it

A friend to come and be kind

* + - 1. Character

Quality: 1. Be sure they are kind.

Scope: 2. Be sure they are kind to others.

History: 3. Be sure they have been kind to others.

* + 1. PURITY OF HEART: EACH HAS RESPECTED THEIR AND YOUR OWN BODY WITH PURITY AS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1. Sacredness of the body:
   * 1. Moses: God spoke before and dwelt in the tent of meeting ("tabernacled" there)

The greatest apologetic in defense of the sacredness of the human body is the fact that Jesus became flesh. The consequences of the Incarnation are profound in their scope.

* + 1. Solomon: Built for God a dwelling place in the Holy of Holies
    2. NT: We are His Body, the Church, and our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.
  1. “ When we come to the church now, we don’t come to the church , we bring it with us.”…"If we soil where God meets with us, we break fellowship with God because He cannot look on sin with comfort."
  2. “If we compromise these principles in regards to illicit relationships—we will find ourselves compromising many other things along the way.”
  3. How can we keep ourselves/our children pure? Here’s a practical application: “Never be alone together without access to adults who know and care. Don’t put yourself in a place where you can fall.”
     1. NURTURE A GROWING INDEPENDENCE; DO NOT FORCE UPON YOUR CHILD A LAW WHICH EXTENDS BEYOND YOUR GOD-GIVEN REACH
        + 1. “If they are a Christian, do not force them to marry an unbeliever; if they are an unbeliever, do not force them to marry a believer."
          2. If marriage is as grand as Scripture makes it to be, then it must be worth \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for… if you are a Christian…wait and look forward to it. If you are an unbeliever…receive Christ!
          3. “I would trust any member of my household with Joseph” How could Dr. Zacharias say something like this?—in other words, what about Joseph is he referring to?
     2. BE A PERSON OF PRAYER
        + 1. In Prayer, God molds us to His will.
          2. Reading God's Word enriches prayer.
          3. It takes time to pray. It takes rest. Sure, there are stressful prayers--and quick ones too, but, largely, prayer demands we slow down and meditate (a lost art in today's informational rush and quick access format)

“Marriage means handing over yourself, your body, your future, your keeping to the one whom you dearly love, although this person may, in many ways, remain a stranger. This tremendous act of faith is something that can unlock in each lover powers of compassion, generosity, joy, passion, fidelity and hope that no one guessed was even there. That is why the confidence of young lovers is not foolish or arrogant, but an expression of a basic fact in human experience that the greatest of human gifts are set to work only when people are prepared to risk everything … and first you risk it before God.”

Ravi Zacharias

Lesson 25

1. **Overview**

Prodigal Sons 2.0 25 Do You See a pattern Here? (Jesus' profound history lesson in the parable of the Prodigal sons)

A Good Way To Go (Every Man's Dream)

Holy War continued…(complexity of our estate)

1. **Read Genesis 25** (4:11)
2. **Discuss**
   1. Do You See a pattern here?
      1. As has been almost taken for granted, Keller's reminding us that Christ's parable of the Prodigal Son ought to be seen as a commentary on the Prodigal nature of *both* sons if it is to be properly understood.
      2. Both sons have deviated from relationship with the Father but our evangelical focus on moralism has oft overshadowed the less obvious sins of the elder to the flagrant carnality of the younger. Here is a brief summary:
         * 1. Younger Brother: rejected relationship with the father by seeking to break the law
           2. Elder Brother: rejected relationship with the father by seeking to uphold the law
      3. The Same is true with the siblings mentioned in this chapter:
         * 1. Ancient

Ishmael: rejects the covenant and follows other gods

Isaac: has his own plan as to how the covenant should be fulfilled

* + - * 1. Less Ancient

Esau

We will save this for point C below

Jacob

* + 1. Just when it becomes easy for the Israelites (& us) to take pride in our favored position or lesser evils, we are faced with the stark reality of the pervasive and unavoidable need for a savior--in the very ancestral line *of the* Saviour!
  1. A Good Way To Go
     1. The chapter opens with a recounting of the blessing God brought to Abraham.
        + 1. A wife and children
          2. Children of children (extended family)
          3. An inheritance for all (although they too would ultimately be separated from Isaac (elucidate concept of competition and plants/seeds)).
     2. Every man's dream: "a good old age, full of years"
        + 1. I am reminded of what the writer of Proverbs says in chapter 16:31:

"Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is obtained by a righteous life."

* + - * 1. There must be a satisfaction to have lived a life so full of experience and, particularly, blessing. It must be like having a multiple-coursed meal and, with the sleepy satisfaction of fullness, sitting back, wiping one's accumulated muss away, and taking in all that has been consumed knowing the love the Cosmic Chef put into the whole of preparing and serving the meal.
        2. Gathered to His people: This is a pregnant phase as Abraham (because of his loving exploits of the chapter 23) was buried in the tomb he purchased for Sarah from the Hittites, but, more importantly, for the Covenant believer, was also literally gathered to his people as the people of the Covenant Lord to experience fellowship after this life--and an incalculably better version than the first!
  1. Holy War continued…(complexity of our estate)
     1. To begin, it is interesting to note how Isaac's estate is described over and against Ishmael's--both referencing the events of chapter 16:
        + 1. God blesses Isaac: It was the tradition late in a Patriarch's life to do so with his sons (as we shall see in detail with the next generation)--and yet, it is God who is highlighted in Abraham & Isaac's case. Isaac settles in precisely the same region where God rescued Ishmael and Hagar as they fled Sarai's wrath during Hagar's pregnancy (ch 16).
          2. Ishmael was gathered to his people (distinct from Isaac's) and he and his descendants were described as settling "over against all his kinsmen". The phrasing here is a paraphrase of God's promise in chapter 16

“Behold, you are pregnant    and shall bear a son.  
You shall call his name Ishmael,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+16&version=ESV" \l "fen-ESV-393c" \o "See footnote c)]    because the Lord has listened to your affliction.  
12He shall be a wild donkey of a man,    his hand against everyone  
    and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”

* + 1. These are not mere descriptions of geographic locations, but of the very nature/character of these two men and their descendants.
    2. One cannot escape the consequences of the matter: Men, particularly as leaders of their households are gravely accountable as the trajectory of their line is inexorably connected to who they are. In this passage, these men are shown to be the "hands that rock the cradle."
    3. In graphically biological fashion, God now proposes to contrast the Holy War more incisively as He brings it to bear in a single pregnancy: Rebekah's. The consequences of this are profoundly far-reaching.[[11]](#footnote-11)
       - 1. We are brought up to speed as the whole of chapter 24 is summarized in 19 &20. (Good transitional writing)
         2. Note that Rebekah, too, was barren. Calvin is quick to remind us that while God delivered the command for humanity to "be fruitful and multiply", He "distributes the power of production in various degrees" to show that "men are not born fortuitously[[12]](#footnote-12)" (Commentary on Genesis 25). The way the passage reads is almost as if God's preparation of Isaac as a miracle-child who was gifted by God as a cure for his mother's own barrenness is what fueled the faith for Isaac to pray to the Lord in good faith that her womb would be opened. There was little doubt in his past Who was responsible for his existence and so he implores out of personal experience with God's covenant presence to the very One who stymied the statistics and biological clock.
         3. Note Rebekah's reaction to particular discomfort within her pregnancy: she wishes for death (verse 22 lit. "Why am I alive?") then seeks the Lord. The former is what Calvin considers to be emotional and extreme[[13]](#footnote-13), while the latter is the measured response of the faithful who are led to seek peace from the only true source of tranquility. God answers in the quizzical, upside-down logic of redemption.

“Two nations are in your womb,

and two peoples from within you shall be divided;

the one shall be stronger than the other,

the older shall serve the younger.”

* + - * 1. The increased pain would seem to translate naturally (though provide an emotional grief linked to the physical) but the practical outplay of the older serving the younger upended the normal Ancient Near-Eastern practice of *primogeniture* in which the family line/authority ran through the firstborn son.
        2. It also instructed and grieved Isaac and Rebekah that God's salvation would be given to one and withheld from the other--"separated by the secret counsel of God" as Calvin reminds us.
        3. Calvin brilliantly likens this to the experience of the Church as Mother: " If any one desires a mystical interpretation of the subject, we may give the following: whereas many hypocrites, who are for a time enclosed in the womb of the Church, pride themselves upon an empty title, and, with insolent boastings, exult over the true sons of God; internal conflicts will hence arise, which will grievously torment the mother herself." (Commentary on Genesis 25:23)
    1. The key players
       - 1. Esau: firstborn, name could be a double play on words (represents Hebrew word for "hairy" or Seir--Esau's future dwelling place); nickname "Edom" means red. Esau seems to fulfill the man's man role--perhaps appealing to masculine sensibilities and suggesting a strength that Jacob would have to overcome. (Always outside/hunted/modded and fixed camels/dug wells--will build his own house/burned everything and watched Man vs. Wild in his tamest of moments)
         2. Jacob: second born (followed as heel grasper--a treacherous version of what could be translated "May God be your rearguard"(Kidner, 145); Jacob seems to quickly defame his name to the more commonly known "supplanter or deceiver". Jacob was a homebody and preferred staying around the tents. (Always in the kitchen/scrapbooked/milked goats (only if he had handwipes handy)/watched Hallmark and, in his wilder moments, took in an episode of Chopped).
         3. Even more interesting to note than these details is the apparent family situation. Why did these two diverge so? It has a bit to do with nature (one cannot deny our genetic makeup--even a small family can exhibit radically different siblings who were so "ever since they were born", but Moses is powerfully overshadowing this truth with the reality that nurture plays a role. If you look at the family dynamic, you see that split allegiances all but destroyed an elusive unity the prophecy already predicted: Issac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob. Do not think for a moment that this didn't shape their futures!

Where does this come from?

First of all let's establish that sin is never an only child--it is connected to other sins and, yes, other people.

Can you guess where this fierce favoritism was rooted?[[14]](#footnote-14)

This extended beyond the personal preference arena of hobbies and interests and personality traits to the very heart of Redemptive history.

* + - 1. Isaac, wrongly (contrary to what God said would happen--a Promise, if you will) placed his Patriarchal hope in the traditional firstborn[[15]](#footnote-15). One cannot help but think that he personally taught him as much about traditional masculinity to give him an edge over his brother--and, from all practical purposes, he seemed to have it--except one: a heart for God.
      2. Rebekah, wrongly (contrary to the good faith virtue of marriage vows and child-rearing) desired Patriarchal status for Jacob--perhaps in obedience to God's promise--and yet by treacherous means.

Consequences

Election, it seems, befuddles us all. From all practical standpoints, Esau seems to possess the courage and rigor and industry to lead a people--particularly through a wilderness (I know who I would vote for if presented such a case); Jacob--even from Moses' perspective, is presented as weak and given to leisure and hardly a man worthy of leadership. Calvin brilliantly offers a reason as to why this could be the case when he says, "In short, the comparison implies that Moses praises Esau on account of his vigor, but speaks of Jacob as being addicted to domestic leisure; and that he describes the disposition of the former as giving promise that he would be a courageous man, while the disposition of the latter had nothing worthy of commendation. Seeing that, by a decree of heaven, the honor of primogeniture would be transferred to Jacob, why did God suffer him to lie down in his tent, and to slumber among ashes; unless it be, that he sometimes intends his election to be concealed for a time, lest men should attribute something to their own preparatory acts?" (Calvin, Commentary Gen 25:27)

In short, God is wiping away any possibility of claiming salvation as anything but the grace of God. Salvation belongs to the LORD.

* + 1. Complexity of our estate
       - 1. Just in case we oversimplify the condition of man, God, through Moses' writing, very quickly shows that even those promised to lead the Covenant People along fall prey to sin, (I wonder if retelling such stories comforted or disturbed Moses as he would be laid bare to a greater degree than some of his forbears! Even Jacob will receive a more detailed treatment than any patriarch before.
         2. In this banter between brothers (vv. 29-34), we have the outplay of nature/nurture as God's sovereign will comes to pass; it is quite fascinating to note that both our genetics and nurture are under God's control! (and so the believer can comfortably maneuver in the realm of both aspects working to shape us--without having to pick a side and argue, pig-headedly, from a singular perspective)[[16]](#footnote-16)

If Esau's nickname (Edom "red") was not commonplace before, it is now as he reaches for the "red stew" and solidifies his future forever. Calvin is quick to remind us that his appetite is so magnified in his mind that he doesn't care what type of food he has--as he makes no reference to flavor--as long as he is quickly satisfied.

Esau's sin was not in requesting soup--and Jacob should have been inclined to grant him lunch on the house (tent?), but the sin was profoundly tucked away in the thought of Esau giving up what is spiritual and eternal for what is shockingly temporal. Sadly, Esau will be hungry again in a few hours--he would never "regain his place in the covenant line."[[17]](#footnote-17) The last line in chapter 25 is harrowing--almost an echo of a slammed door experienced in the opening of Adam & Eve's eyes or casting out of the Garden. (Gen 3:7,24)[[18]](#footnote-18)

Jacob, on the other hand, sees the value of the birthright. In fact, there is no cruelty done here on Jacob's part--he is laying claim to what God already predicted and not using deception (yet) to do so. Calvin, in fact, is convinced Jacob does this "with a pious intention, that he may hereby the more fully establish the certainty of his own election." (Commentary of Gen. 25:33);

"Since the common feeling of mankind rejects this doctrine, there have been found, in all ages, acute men, who have fiercely disputed against the election of God. It is not my present purpose to refute or to weaken their calumnies: let it suffice us to hold fast what we gather from Paul's interpretation; that whereas the whole human race deserves the same destruction, and is bound under the same sentence of condemnation, some are delivered by gratuitous mercy, others are justly left in their own destruction: and that those whom God has chosen are not preferred to others, because God foresaw they would be holy, but in order that they might be holy. But if the first origin of holiness is the election of God, we seek in vain for that difference in men, which rests solely in the will of God."

Calvin~Commentary on Genesis 25:23

Lesson 26

1. **Overview**

Prodigal Sons 2.0 26 The Right Word at the Right Time

"I learned from the best" (Schooled, Again, by a pagan; We act out of what we know)

"Blessings All Mine and Ten-Thousand Beside"

Holy War continued…(second verse, same as the first--a little bit louder and a little bit worse)

1. **Read Genesis 26** (4:48)
2. **Discuss**
   1. The Right Word at the Right Time
      1. If you recall, famine is (& continues to be) a way in which God refines and guides the patriarchs. Abraham had suffered through this twice--and Isaac encounters one here.
      2. God seems to preserve Isaac from the difficulty of both decision-making and an extended journey to Egypt as He gives him a directive: stay in the Land He promised to him.
      3. Yet, in the personal intimacy we have come to see as a pattern in Genesis, God gives the gift of grace and faith by reiterating the Abrahamic promise; Isaac seems to follow this without delay. Calvin reminds the reader that this seems to be in accordance with Paul's reminder that God does not expose His people to suffering that they cannot bear (Cor. 10:13); this is a commendation of the Divine as much as it is a recognition of weakness in Isaac.
      4. Note that Isaac, though he settles in the Promised Land, is yet a stranger there. God "will establish the oath" (covenant) and a time will come when he, or his descendants, will exercise dominion over it. Now is not that time.
   2. "I learned from the best"
      1. Without going into the detail of the last lesson, we have another shining example of "like father, like son" here.
      2. Once again, a husband is overly concerned with his own safety at the risk of his wife, marriage, and progeny (Covenant line).
      3. This time Abimelech (a son or possible grandson to the former with whom Abraham dealt) happens to catch Isaac and Rebekah in a state appropriate to marriage alone (while perhaps not conjugal, they exhibit a clear non-sibling relationship as Abimelech had formerly trusted from Isaac).
      4. Calvin is quick to point out that Isaac's honorable character and religious practice ("integrity of his life") must have garnered favor in Abimelech's eyes because he does not simply condemn Isaac as if he was guilty of fornication or incest (a plausible charge given what Abimelech knows)--but, rather, graciously converses with Isaac with impunity.
      5. Abimelech takes his "righteous" anger one step further and reminds Isaac of the grave danger of the situation in which Isaac has placed all involved: Rebekah's chastity and the guilt of a nation. Calvin reminds us that, for all practical purposes, Rebekah was the "only mother of the church" and for Abimelech to be so pressed of conscience to regard the violation of wedlock to be worthy of divine judgment, how much more should we, the children of God--the giver of the institution of marriage, preserve this sacred covenant and stay true to the knowledge engraved on our hearts.
      6. Not only does Abimelech step in and hold Isaac accountable to uphold his marriage vow, he (in departure from Ancient Near-Eastern tradition) treats Isaac as a near-equal by issuing a national edict to protect Rebekah, Isaac, their marriage, and Isaac from himself. [v. 10 “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”] Leaders, at times, are called to protect fools from themselves and Isaac, who demonstrated a timidity and willingness to value himself above his wife, needed more than a one-sided reminder to protect his family line.
      7. Lastly, this edict rings with a particularly "Abrahamic" tone as it seems to be a secular restatement of the covenant promise to "Bless those who keep Isaac & his family in tact"--or, perhaps, more tacitly, the negative portion "Curse those who would deign to touch Isaac or his wife."
   3. "Blessings All Mine and Ten-Thousand Beside"
      1. Let us not be slow in recognizing from the start Who blesses Isaac. I suppose it would also be wise to note that Isaac had a responsibility to sow!
      2. This story is a tacit reminder that while it is the good Lord who blesses, wealth brings with it additional troubles that, in God's mercy, He uses to wake us up to the reality of the fallen world and long for the (still) invisible reality of the celestial world.
      3. There seems to be a greater version of the conflict between Abraham's & Lot's herdsmen on the horizon and Abimelech, perhaps sensing the envy of his people, bids that Isaac and his people settle elsewhere. It is unclear whether the intent was advice as from a friend and that the might of Isaac's people and God were mentioned to encourage Isaac to feel strong enough to survive apart--or that Isaac had fallen out of Abimelech's good graces and the fear of a takeover fueled the move. Whatever the motive may have been from the king's end, we are clearly told how Isaac viewed the matter as verse 27 communicates that he distinctly perceived that Abimelech hated him. The unfair depriving Isaac from the necessity of water from wells dug by his own father is a clear sign that the once amicable relationship was strained. There is no reason to believe that the stopped up wells simply could have been re-dug and given resource aplenty for all of the Hebrew people and herds.
   4. Holy War continued…(second verse, same as the first--a little bit louder and a little bit worse)
      1. Though the Holy War is raging within Isaac's own family, it seems appropriate to expose the outright rejection of God's people by the Philistine nation. This is the familiar wheelhouse in which that particular people group will operate for the rest of OT history (A long term fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise to "curse those that curse you"). One can plainly see that it is not merely unkindness that is the harbinger of the cursings--but a rejection of the Covenant intimately bound up in the rejection of the People of God.
      2. Upon arriving in Beer-Sheba, God visits Isaac immediately--bringing to mind his distressed state. For the people of God, Calvin reminds us, the visitation of God in His Word is a refreshment greater "than if a thousand rivers of nectar had flowed unto him". While the stresses of leading a people (and feeding a people) are increased tenfold through the "peaceful" extrication from tended land (basically forcing an unnatural nomadic existence through multiple relocations through looming conflict), the presence and promise of the Lord is a boon capable of satisfying what even food and water cannot address.
         * 1. We lose sight of the fact of the impact God's words spoken in verse 24 could conjure; note this: God identifies Himself as "the God of Abraham your father"-- Why?--why not "Your God" or "the God of Isaac"? While Abraham is no longer living, this phrasing may have brought Isaac back to Mt. Moriah--to the moment when the very Covenant Promise kept Isaac from being sacrificed as the lamb, and provided not only a ram, but life in which to explore relationship with the God of Abraham his father. God is reminding Isaac who He is and the very same God who led his father and saved his life will continue to do so for the son. Never disconnect the present relationship with God to all former oaths and ties--they form one story, one covenant.
           2. God's admonition to "fear not" carries with it a profound reality: Peace cannot be found outside of God's Word. Let me say that again: Peace *cannot* be found outside of God's Word. Those that separate themselves from the Holy Scriptures--consciously or not, fashion for themselves a relentless prison in which rest *cannot* be found.
           3. Pause a moment and consider all that verse 25 is saying. Worship--the reaction of the righteous to God as experienced in God's Kingdom promises. Do I come on Sunday with such a context--ready to meet God's Provision?
      3. Calvin ties a very tight cord between Isaac's piety (as seen through his worship of gratitude) and Abimelech's plan to oust him. The bookends from chapter 21 to 26 is an oath made with the kings of Gerar (one Abraham, another Isaac) in which Abraham dug a well and so named the area Beersheba and Isaac moved to his rightful land (Abe purchased earlier) and found it to be unlawfully stopped up. The fact that the chapter ends with Isaac's servants digging a well (v. 25) followed by a period of time until the servants returned to Isaac to claim they found water (v.32) suggests both the laborious nature of their task as well as the probable fraudulence with which the Hittite inhabitants treated Isaac and his well.[[19]](#footnote-19)
         * 1. The act of oath-making/swearing is important enough to God that it made the Decalogue (20:7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain"). While the commandment extends from oaths to character to modern day curses, the act between Abimelech and Isaac is not only solemn--it is appropriate as it uses God's name to extend and establish peace--a sentiment Christ echoes in the NT beatitudes.
           2. Isaac's naming the well Shibah (Heb, "oath") seems to be hearkening to Abraham's original name for the place. This and the fact that Moses recognizes its contemporary usage is demonstrative of the permanence of God's covenant. Isaac is couching this entire event in the God of his father (and genuinely owning the covenant as well)--and Moses is reminding the people that the same Promise still stands and will bless them as they seek to reestablish a nation in the Promised Land.
      4. The Holy war comes to roost in the Covenant family as well as Esau's rejection is ramped up as Esau solidifies his intermingling with the inhabitants of the land by marrying them (note contrast with command Abraham gave Eliezer regarding Isaac's potential bride).
      5. Esau's move allows Moses to teach a few covenantal principles:
         * 1. Esau's rejection of the covenant is galvanized by marrying Hittites.
           2. The fact that he took *two* wives is not only contrary to God's design in marriage, but also a sign of his fleshly indulgence/appetite for such things (Calvin, v. 34)
           3. This violation of the Covenant grieves Isaac and Rebekah. While this it may seem very local to the Patriarchal family, the fact that it grieved them so brings to light two things:

Isaac and Rebekah were reminded of the gravity of compromise with a reprobate people.

Moses was able to illustrate the intimate effects of compromise/unlawful intermarriage to the Nation of Israel as they would be faced with identical circumstances/temptations in the near future. Here they had the example of Holy parents to remind them of what could happen if the covenant is so summarily rejected by their children--and even encouraged by a parent (eg. Isaac's favoring Esau).

Lesson 27

1. **Overview**

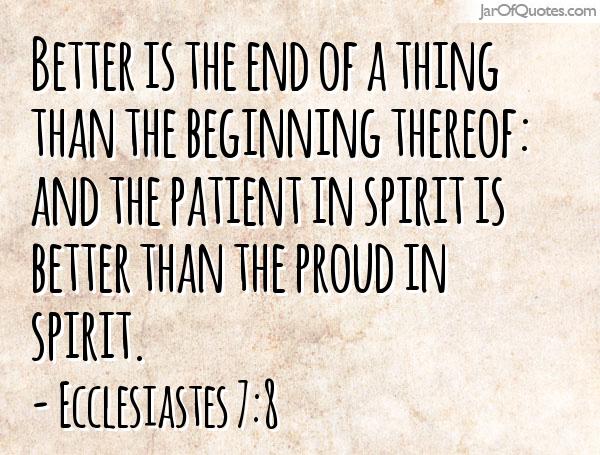
? 27 The Right Word at the Right Time

"I learned from the best" (Schooled, Again, by a pagan; We act out of what we know)

"Blessings All Mine and Ten-Thousand Beside"

Holy War continued…(second verse, same as the first--a little bit louder and a little bit worse)

1. **Read Genesis 27** (4:48)
2. **Discuss**
   1. The Right Word at the Right Time
      1. If you recall, famine is (& continues to be) a way in which God refines and guides the patriarchs. Abraham had suffered through this twice--and Isaac encounters one here.

**A Study of Genesis through Covenant Eyes**

**Theme chapters concepts**

1. Creation & Call 1,2 How important is the start of all things? (4 fundamental questions every human ought face)

How potent is God's Word? ("God's powerful, authoritative, self-expression" Frame)

Imago Dei--Does is really matter? (Unique hybrids in creation)

Now that we are here--what are we to do? (Cultural Mandate: 1:28-31; children/land/wealth)

What is the Covenant God made with man? (**Adamic Covenant**: 2: 15-17)

1. /3. Fall & Promise 3 Where did sin come from? (nature of sin; contrast Father Gabriel's words with Christ's words)

What happened when we sinned? (The four divorces)

Wait--was I with Adam, so why am I being punished? (Federal Headship)

To whom was the first proclamation of the Gospel given? (The Promise veiled)

1. Sin is Crouching 4 How do we know Adam & Eve were saved? (obedience & belief; sacrificial system in full swing)

What did Adam & Eve believe about their children--the importance of a holy line?

(From Promise to Holy War)

Why did God preserve Cain? & how it was not done!)

Why do evil men "flourish?" (God sends rain on the righteous & unrighteous)

Can man make evil more evil? (the Ancient bravado of Lamech; when men go down with fists vs. God)

1. Dirge of Death 5 How has disobedience worked out? What seems to be the consequence of the Fall?

How long did they live? What could be accomplished in a lifetime?

Does the Promise still stand? Does anyone believe it? (A sliver of hope in the darkness)

1. Covenant of Preservation 6 What is the fastest natural way to corrupt humanity?--forget the Covenant

Who were these "sons of God" & "daughters of men"?

All that glitters is not gold. What if I find her attractive? (an ancient motif for marrying within the faith)

We are down to 8 people--where does the Promise now stand?

The **Noahic Covenant**

1. Violence meets violence 7,8 Why the uneven number of animals…I thought two by two was the rule?

Where did all that rain come from?

How long were they in the Ark? (waiting for the rain; waiting for the land)

All that glitters is not gold. What if I find her attractive? (an ancient motif for marrying within the faith)

Of what use is doing all this work--what if this happens again?

1. Violence meets Justice 9 Wait, haven’t we heard this before? (reiteration of cultural mandate)

Isn't capital punishment murder? (How valuable am I?)

How do I know God's covenant with Noah applies to us today? (the sign)

Has God won the Holy War? (God: 8, Satan: 0…oh, wait)

1. British Parliament & 10 ,11 Wait, how can the Tower of Babel happen (ch 11) if everyone migrated in chapter 10?

The Table of Nations Can't we skip all these names? (The value of ch 10: history; identity; present purpose)

Checking in with the Covenant: How are we doing? (tower of babel)

Is it over? Has Satan won the Holy War? (God: ?, Satan: everyone)

Is God still on the throne? ('came down'; the brilliance of Moses' writing style)

1. Call of the Ur-bane 12 Wait, Nahor married whom? (ch 11 end; genetic strength; law yet to come)

Making sense of the context of barrenness (puzzles scholars—befits the covenant!)

Was Abram a believer? (Called out of Ur--a land of ziggurats and covenants)

Sound check: first mention of the Abramic Promise

Abram’s lot: a vested interest? (foreshadowing concern; tells us a bit about Abe)

Fleeing to Egypt: the original escape? (circumstances that move us)

Ladies, how would you feel? (saving his skin—Sarai as human shield)

A Lesson from a Pagan (ever been chided by an unbeliever?)

1. Genuflection of the Soul 13 Why does Moses reiterate Abe’s wealth? (a reminder of God’s providence—and blessing despite our sin; what is left out?)

Sound check: Where does Abe stand with the Lord? (returns to Altar between Bethel (House of God) and Ai) Can things go too well for you and bring harm? (“carrying capacity”; God’s means of spreading them out)

What kind of a man was Abram? (two traits of a good leader)

Why the parenthetical? (foreshadowing future destruction reassuring Zoar once existed)

1. First Communion 14 Wait, isn't the Bible just about Redemptive History? (the Historicity of Scripture)

Checking in with History: (the war of 9 kings)

Do people "fall from grace" in a day? (the danger of Lot's progression)

God's Providence & Plants (A priest with a timely message)

Who is Melchizedek? (prophet, priest and king--wait…)

Important? (the writer of Hebrews says so…)

13/14. **The Abramic Covenant** 15 Is Abe's fear legitimate? (where comfort finds its strength)

Elieze..who? Where'd he come from? (taking things into your own hands)

Did Abram have a case to question God? (cultural stigma; nature of God's Promise)

A Covenant cut in blood (parts of a near eastern Suzerain-Vassal Treaty)

Smoking pot?' Blazing torch? What is God doing? What is God saying? (remember audience)

1. The Abramic Covenant: 16 What does it look like to be Set Apart? (taking things into your own hands)

Millennial Version Are there consequences in seeking to do God's job for Him? (the logical consequences of ideas)

Does Israel see the great irony? (In today's story, with whom ought Israel identify more--Sarai or Hagar?)

How wide is God's mercy? (consider who is being sustained here-and its consequences for today)

1. The Abrahamic Covenant: 17 What does it look like to be Set Apart? (taking righteous action as a result of obedience)

Illustrated Version Are there consequences in serving a Sovereign God? (the logical consequences of submission)

How do I know if I believe? (the surest sign you trust someone else)

1. /18. The Abrahamic Covenant: 18 How important is hospitality? (three stories)

Theatrical Version What does it look like to be Set Apart? (just because you believe doesn't mean you believe)

What is an essential quality of a leader in the eyes of the Lord? (the power of eavesdropping)

What is prayer's purpose if we serve a Sovereign God?

1. On Account of Another's 19 Are people simply either good or bad? (Human complexity and the potent yet limited power of example) Righteousness Where is the Gospel amidst hellfire and brimstone? It's just one little sin…(the incalculable consequences of one sin)
2. What, Again? 20 The Necessity of being on the Team to understand the Coach's Game plan (How can readers studying the same passage arrive at such disparate conclusions?)

A lesson through a Pagan (Checking in with the Covenant: Salvation is from Whom?)

How should those without the law know better?

What? Riches again? (The making of a Near Eastern settlement)

21. Barren No More 21 What does obedient action look like in response to God's perfect timing?

Keeping promises even when it hurts (We serve a Promise-keeping God)

Marriage as a reflection of our values

A formidable people (God's blessing and the making of a Near Eastern treaty)

22. )

1. http://www.healthcaredailyonline.com/psychology/strange-facts-the-average-person-eats-6-lbs-of-dirt [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-1.htm#EndNote\_ANT\_1.8a [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.bibleinfo.com/en/topics/islam [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ministries, Ligioner. [*"Reformation Study Bible"*](http://reformationstudybible.com/). Reformation Study Bible. Reformation Trust Publishing*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/genesis/18.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/genesis/18.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/genesis/18.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Question: Could you please discuss Exodus 4:24-26 where God seeks to kill Moses for not circumcising his son? Obviously Moses felt it was important to include this message for future generations, yet the message now seems to be obscure.

   Answer:Moses' original audience for the book of Exodus was probably the second generation of Israelites that Moses led from Egypt in the Exodus. His main purpose in the book was to demonstrate his divine authorization as covenant mediator, and thereby to encourage Israel to fulfill the covenant as Moses outlined it in Exodus.

   Exodus 4:24-26 in particular gives an example from Moses own life of the importance of adhering to the covenant stipulations (i.e. the Law). Specifically, they demonstrate that God was willing to destroy his own people if they rebelled against his covenant. Even the covenant mediator Moses, who found favor with God far beyond that enjoyed by the nation at large, was bound to obey God's covenant upon pain of death. This taught the original audience how serious God was about his covenant, and was a strong warning to them to obey him.

   For Christians, this passage is also important because of its emphasis on covenant and obedience. God's character and covenants do not change; the same God that planned to kill Moses for his disobedience is the God we worship. However, because Christ perfectly fulfilled the covenant, Christians may rest assured that they will not fall under God's judgment in this way. The harsh standards of the Law still apply, but in Christ we are accounted as fulfilling these standards perfectly. At the same time, knowing how important these standards are to God should encourage us to keep them -- not to gain salvation, but in loving response to our Father. Further, we should be aware that even though God will not judge and condemn us for breaking his Law, he may well discipline us, and discipline is never enjoyable.

   There are also some other important aspects of this passage to note. First, God was willing to kill Moses, and intended to do so. Yet, he did not. This does not mean that God's eternal counsel changed, or that he is not sovereign. Nor does it mean that he did not know that Zipporah was going to come to Moses' rescue. God had foreordained Moses to disobey and Zipporah to save him. The passage does, however, indicate that in his providential dealings with his people, God alters his intentions and actions toward us according to our responses to him. Prayer is not useless, and neither is obedience. God really does use our actions as means to accomplish his will, and he really does respond to and interact with us. We are not just puppets, and God is not just pretending to change his mind. The foreordination of his eternal counsel does not prevent him from interacting with his creation, or from experiencing different attitudes and emotions as his eternal counsel unfolds in creation.

   Second, we should note the reason that God was so angry: Moses failed to place the covenant sign of circumcision on his son. Now, the covenant sign is no longer circumcision but baptism. Still, the point is that God is very serious about the fact that the children of his people are in covenant with him, and he is very protective of these children. His anger with Moses was not just anger for Moses' failure to obey him, but was anger with Moses in defense of Moses' son -- any Israelite son who was not circumcised was to be cut off from his people (Gen. 17:14). God was so concerned with this covenant child that he intended to kill Moses in part for jeopardizing the child's participation in the covenant community. In fact, even in the New Testament we find God killing people for mistreating other covenant members (1 Cor. 11:30), so this is something we should take very seriously. This is not to say that our Baptist brothers and sisters are tempting God's wrath. After all, they do not withhold the covenant sign from their children consciously as Moses did. Also, they tend to see their children as special (e.g. baby dedications, etc.), and they certainly involve them in the church community. Rather, it is to encourage us all to recognize first that our children are in covenant with God, and second that this makes them very special to God. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Question I hear at times that Ishmael was saved and he receives a bum rap when people call him lost. Was Ishmael lost or saved? If possible, please use the American Standard Version (ASV) Bible in your response.

   Answer: Let's look at Paul's argument in: Galatians 4:22-23

   For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman. 23 Howbeit the son by the handmaid is born after the flesh; but the son by the freewoman is born through promise. 24 Which things contain an allegory: for these women are two covenants; one from mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar.25 Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children.

   26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother.27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: For more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband.28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now.30 Howbeit what saith the scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman.31 Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman.

   Paul's analogy here is important for understanding who Ishmael was and who are the real descendents of Abraham. There are two mothers (Hagar and Sarah), two sons (Ishmael and Isaac), two covenants (of works and grace), and two cities (the now and the new). Israelites even today claim to be the decedents of Abraham. They claim to be "the saved." However, we need to discern which line of Abraham they are from. Are they from Hagar (according to the flesh), or Sarah (according to the promise? Are they bond slaves to sin and the law, or are they free in Christ? Are they persecutors or the persecuted? There is a lot in the question "Who's Your Mama?" - i.e., what is your religion? Judaism or Christianity?

   But where in the Old Testament did Paul base his argument?

   Indeed, God did bless the line of Ishmael as he promised to Abraham. Ishmael was fruitful and multiplied. He indeed became the father of twelve princes and a great nation (Gen. 17:20). But, Paul read further than Genesis 17 and 20 to Genesis 25:12-18 to discover whom these people became. Here we notice some interesting things about Ishmael:

   12 These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham. 13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa,15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. 17 (These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) 18 They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen.

   Here we see that Ishmael, though as a lad he served the Lord, he was "gathered to his own people" and not buried with his own covenant parents (compare with Gen. 23:1-20). We also see that he "gathered against his own kinsman." Ishmael's life seems to be a testimony of a lad who was in covenant with the Lord and later in life was discovered to be an apostate. As John says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).

   We need not stop here. What does the Book of Psalms say concerning this matter? Here we see the Ishmaelites who were against Jehovah:

   Psalm 83:1 1 O God, keep not thou silence: Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. 2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult; And they that hate thee have lifted up the head. 3 Thy take crafty counsel against thy people, And consult together against thy hidden ones. 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5 For they have consulted together with one consent; Against thee do they make a covenant: 6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre: 8 Assyria also is joined with them; They have helped the children of Lot. Selah

   Moreover, Ishmael's sisters Mahalath (Gen. 28:9) and Basemath (Gen. 36:3) were married to Esau (Gen. 28:89), who was not of the elect (Rom. 9). God himself did not consider Ishmael Abraham's "true son," saying of Isaac: "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Gen. 22:2). The God of the Bible is called "the God of Israel" 203 times. Never is he called the God of any other people and certainly never is He called the God of Ishmael or of the Arabs. Moses further declares, "Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Exod. 3:15). Twelve times this name is given to God. Christ argued the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (i.e. all believers) from this title, declaring that "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matt. 22:31-32).

   In conclusion, we may say that God "blessed" reprobate Ishmael (Gen 17:20) and is "long-suffering" to the vessels of wrath (Rom. 9:22) who despise his goodness and forbearance (Rom. 2:4). Indeed, it is their unthankfulness for genuine favors that renders them so guilty (Rom. 1:21). Paul read the Old Testament and made his argument in Galatians 4. It was in Issac's seed, not Ishmael's, that God kept his promise of the everlasting covenant (Gen. 26:3-4). God kept his promise to Abraham, but Ishmael was a reprobate he did not keep the whole law. The line that was of Hagar symbolizes that which was lost. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. http://considerthis2.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/114-1-I-Isaac-take-you-Rebekah.mp3 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This twin pregnancy addresses and helps clarify issues ranging from the complexity of modern medicine (genetics, twinning) to the mysteriousness of theological doctrines of election and predestination; Paul uses this very situation as a polemic for the orthodox understanding of God's role and character in election (see Romans 9:11-24); I have included Calvin's brief but profound conclusion on the matter in the inset at the end of this lesson. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Fortuitously means "by chance rather than intention" (https://www.google.com/search?q=fortuitously&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Calvin probes more deeply here by describing Rebekah's situation so, " And no wonder; for she thinks that it would be a hundred times better for her to die, than that she have within her the horrible prodigy of twin—brothers, shut up in her womb, carrying on intestine war. They, therefore, are mistaken, who attribute this complaint to female impatience, since it was not so much extorted by pain or torture, as by abhorrence of the prodigy. For she doubtless perceived that this conflict did not arise from natural causes, but was a prodigy portending some dreadful and tragic end. She also necessarily felt some fear of the divine anger stealing over her: as it is usual with the faithful not to confine their thoughts to the evil immediately present with them, but to trace it to its cause; and hence they tremble through the apprehension of divine judgment." (Commentary on Genesis 25:22) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This is a tacit illustration of the words that Moses would record from Mount Sinai "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands [of generations], to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (Ex. 20:5,6); there is, of course a logic here that shows a lesser negative for those who believe, and a lesser positive, for those who "obey". [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. It is interesting to note that Scripture declares a reason why Isaac favored Esau--a reason Moses and the Israelites would have been sensitive to as God deeply reminded them of the consequence of their "gastronomic folly" (see Ex. 16; Hosea 3) and even Moses' own sin (see Numbers 20) where he struck the rock for water rather than speaking to it as God commanded. This would disqualify him from entering the Promised Land. You might say the Israelites were a food sensitive people--and so are we. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This debate gives opportunity to demonstrate both the inherent sin nature of mankind (nature) as well as man's moral culpability in every situation (nurture). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Understanding, of course, that, from a covenant perspective, he never actually had said place--God's oracle ensured this. (v.23) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The writer of Hebrews give us, perhaps, the most incisive critique of Esau: 14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; 16 that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears." (Heb. 12:15-17); we will see this play out when Esau seeks Isaac's blessing; also, I find it fascinating that Esau is mentioned as a counter-example in a passage where unity is the focus at the start. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Calvin in his commentary on verse 25, writes both a plausible historical explanation as well as a timely Biblical counsel: "I have, therefore, no doubt, that throughout the whole of that region a conspiracy had been entered into by the inhabitants, for the purpose of expelling the holy man, through want of water; so that this well of Sheba also had been fraudulently stopped up. The context also shows, that the first care of the holy patriarch concerned the worship of God, because Moses relates that an altar was erected, before he speaks of the well. Now it is of importance to observe with what great troubles these holy fathers continually had to contend; which they never would have been able to overcome or to endure, unless they had been far removed from our delicate course of living. For how severely should we feel the loss of water, seeing that we often rage against God if we have not abundance of wine? Therefore, by such examples, let the faithful learn to accustom themselves to patient endurance: and if at any time food and other necessaries of life fail them, let them turn their eyes to Isaac, who wandered, parched with thirst, in the inheritance which had been divinely promised him." Let us remind ourselves that Calvin lived in 16th century Europe that, while it boasted great rebirth in science and commerce as well as the glory of the Protestant Reformation, also continued to struggle against the Black Death (bubonic plague) and the economic and political instability of early capitalism. This was hardly a time of a "delicate course of living" according to our modern American standards (!). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)