

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**  
**3RD-5TH GRADE**  
**TEACHER'S PACKET**

**SUNDAY MORNING**

Study 3

*God's Covenant with Abram*



# God's Covenant with Abram

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** To learn God's promises to Abram and show through Abram's example that the right response to God's promises is to trust and obey.

## Key Verses

Genesis 15—Main Teaching Passage

Genesis 12:1-7

Galatians 3:6

## Memory Verse - Genesis 12:2-3

"I will make you a great nation. I will bless you... And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

## Hook

Review the memory verse from last week, Genesis 9:13.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

God's special promise would be kept through Noah's son, Shem. Many years passed and God came and spoke to Abram, one of Shem's descendants. God told Abram to leave his family and leave his land because God was going to grow his family, give him a new land, and bless the entire world through him. Abram believed God's promise, so Abram obeyed.

After Abram had been in the Promised Land for some time, God appeared to him again, and told Abram not to be afraid because God was with him to protect and provide for him. But Abram was old, and getting older. Years had gone by and Abram still didn't have any children. God told Abram to look at the night sky and repeated His promise: Abram's descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Abram again believed God's promise, and God accounted it to him as righteousness.

Abram believed God, but he wondered how this would all come to pass, so he asked. In response to Abram's question, God told Abram to get a cow, a ram, a turtle dove and a pigeon. Abram obeyed. God then told Abram to cut the cow and the ram in half, but not the birds. Again, Abram obeyed. As the sun set, Abram fell into a deep sleep and God spoke to him. He promised Abram that his descendants would be slaves for 400 years, but that they would return to the land God had promised. Then a smoking oven and burning torch passed through the animals. God alone passed through the animals and on that same day made a covenant with Abram.

The interpretation/  
exegesis of the passage.  
What does this passage  
mean? How does this  
passage apply to my life?

# LOOK

There are different kinds of promises. Sometimes, someone may make you a "right now" promise. Generally, we don't like to wait for things, so those are probably your favorite kind of promises. Other times we might get an "on the way" promise. Those are the promises we have to wait for. "We're going on vacation starting today!" is very different from "Someday we will go on vacation."

The Bible contains both kinds of promises. Promises of who God is and what He is doing right now, and things that God has promised but haven't happened yet. In today's lesson, we get a look at both of those kinds of promises, and we can learn from Abram's example by how we should respond to these promises in the bible.

First, we see that Abram was afraid. God told him not to be. God often says this in the Bible, because people are often afraid. Usually, when God says don't be afraid, He then explains why: "I am your shield

# LOOK (Continued)

(protection) and your great reward (provision).” That’s a “right now” promise. That is who God is to those who trust in Him, and who God is the answer to all of our fears. “When I am afraid I will trust in you” (Psalm 56:3).

So Abram trusted God, but he didn’t understand what God was waiting for regarding God’s “on the way” promise. God’s timing is usually different than ours. God wants to give us an opportunity to trust Him while we wait. That’s how we learn to trust Him more! And that’s exactly what Abram did. God gave Abram some “right now” promises to hold onto while he waited for the “on the way” promises.

As God reminded Abram of His “on the way” promise, God had Abram do something strange. Back in those days, if people wanted to make the most serious promise, they would cut animals in half, then walk together between the animals. Those making the promise were in agreement that if one of them broke the promise, they would be killed like one of the animals. But the amazing thing is, Abram and God didn’t walk through the animals together. God passed through alone!

That was God’s way of showing Abram that God would keep His promise no matter what - forever! Nothing could stop God’s forever promise from coming true, not even if Abram’s descendants were held hostage as slaves in a foreign land for hundreds of years! God would bring His special people back to His special place and make sure His special promise to bless the whole world came true. And that promise did come true through Jesus. Through Him, the whole world can enter into God’s family and enjoy God’s promises. All that is needed is to trust and obey.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

# TOOK

As a class memorize Genesis 12:2-3.

**Pray:** Praise God for keeping His promises to Abram and to us. Ask God to help you trust Him more and to help you remember His promises this week.

**Parent Question:** What were two things God promised Abram?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Genesis 15 by David Guzik

### ***GOD CONFIRMS THE COVENANT WITH ABRAM***

**A. God speaks to Abram's fears and doubts with a promise.**

**1. ([Genesis 15:1](#))** The word of the LORD comes to Abram in a vision.

**After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."**

**a. After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram:** The **word of the LORD** came to the people of the Bible in many different ways. It might come by a personal appearance of God, by an audible voice, by visions or dreams, by the ministry of angels, by the working of the Spirit of God upon the mind, by the making alive of a passage of Scripture to the heart, or by the ministry of a prophet or preacher. Here, **the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision.**

**b. Do not be afraid... I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward:** There was a good reason for God to say this. Abram had just defeated a much larger army made up of a partnership of four kings. He had reason to be afraid, expecting an attack of retribution.

**c. Your shield... your reward:** Abram needed a **shield**, because he expected to be attacked. He needed **reward**, because he had denied himself great reward offered from the king of Sodom ([Genesis 14:21-24](#)).

**i.** God told Abram that though he had sacrificed for His sake, he would not be the loser for it. God would more than make up what Abram gave unto the LORD.

**ii.** God knows how to become the answer to our need. When we need a **shield** or a **reward**, He becomes those things for us. "I do not think that any human mind can ever grasp the fullness of meaning of these four words, 'I am thy reward.' God himself the reward of his faithful people" (Spurgeon).

**iii.** "If God be our reward, let us take care that we do really enjoy him. Let us exult in him, and let us not be pining after any other joy." (Spurgeon)

**d. Do not be afraid:** God told Abram this because he *was* afraid, and afraid for good reasons. Yet God also gave him a *reason* to put away his fear. God doesn't tell us **do not be afraid** without giving us a reason to put away our fear.

**2. ([Genesis 15:2-3](#))** Abram honestly expresses his doubts.

**But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"**

**a. Lord GOD, what will You give me:** Certainly, Abram appreciated the promise from God. At the same time, there was perhaps a sense in which it sounded empty to Abram. It was as if Abram said, "What good is it that You are my shield and reward? The only thing I've ever wanted with any passion in my life is a son. Where are the descendants You promised me?"

i. It is as if Abram meant, "LORD, You have prospered me materially and now promise to give me more, and to protect me. But what good is it if I don't have a descendant to give it to? I want the son You promised to give me!"

ii. **Eliezer of Damascus** was Abram's chief assistant, his main servant and associate. He was a good man, but not a son to Abram.

b. **Look, You have given me no offspring:** Abram's bold honesty before the LORD is a wonderful example of prayer. Instead of holding in his frustration, he brought it before God with an honest heart.

c. **You have given me no offspring:** To some degree, this question doubted God. Yet we can discern the difference between a doubt that *denies* God's promise and a doubt that *desires* God's promise. Abram *wanted* to believe and looked to God to strengthen his faith.

### 3. ([Genesis 15:4-5](#)) God speaks to Abram's doubts with a promise.

**And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."**

a. **This one shall not be your heir:** Abram would not end his days with Eliezer as his only **heir**. God would indeed fulfill the promise made long before, originally recorded in [Genesis 12:2](#) and [13:15-16](#). Abram needed to be reminded of the promises of God, and we also need the reminders.

b. **One who will come from your own body shall be your heir:** This promise was repeated to Abram with such clarity and certainty that it was reasonable to suppose that he expected it would be soon fulfilled. Yet in the chronology of Abram's life, the fulfillment of *this* promise was still 15 years away.

i. No wonder the writer to the Hebrews says: *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises* ([Hebrews 6:11-12](#)). We need faith and patience to inherit God's promises.

c. **From your own body:** God explained exactly what He meant in His promise to Abram. He meant that it wasn't a spiritual descendant who would inherit the promise (such as Eliezer), but an actual flesh-and-blood descendant. This was necessary, because we sometimes *misunderstand* God's promises.

d. **Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them:** God not only *told* Abram the promise again, but He *confirmed* it with an illustration. The stars in the sky showed how vast the number of Abram's descendants would be.

i. One of those descendants — the greatest of his descendants — would be the *Bright and Morning Star* ([Revelation 22:16](#)).

### 4. ([Genesis 15:6](#)) Abram's response of faith to God's promise.

**And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.**

a. **And he believed in the LORD:** When Abram put his trust in God, specifically in God's promise to him (descendants leading to the Messiah), God credited (**accounted**) this belief to Abram's account as righteousness.

i. There are essentially two types of righteousness: righteousness we *accomplish* by our own efforts, and righteousness *accounted* to us by the work of God when we believe.

ii. Since none of us can be good enough to accomplish perfect righteousness, we must have God's righteousness accounted to us by doing just what Abram did: **he believed in the LORD**.

iii. God's accounting is not pretending. God does not account to us a pretended righteousness, but a real one in Jesus Christ ([Romans 4:1-3](#)).



**b. And He accounted it to him for righteousness:** This is one of the clearest expressions in the Bible of the truth of salvation by grace, through faith. This is the first time *believe* is used in the Bible and the first time *righteousness* is used in the Bible. This is the New Testament gospel in the Hebrew Scriptures, later quoted four times in the New Testament.

i. *What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."* ([Romans 4:1-3](#))

ii. *Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.* ([Romans 4:9-10](#))

iii. *And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.* ([Romans 4:19-24](#))

iv. *Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? — just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.* ([Galatians 3:5-7](#))

**c. He accounted it to him for righteousness:** [Romans 4:9-10](#) makes much of the fact this righteousness was accounted to Abram before he was circumcised (later happening in [Genesis 17](#)). No one could say Abram was made righteous *because* of his obedience or fulfillment of religious law or ritual. It was faith and faith alone that caused God to account Abram as righteous.

i. "When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen... This is the chief article from which all other doctrines have flowed... It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour." (Luther, cited in Boice)

**d. He believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness:** The faith that made Abram righteous wasn't so much believing *in* God (as we usually speak of believing in God), as it was *believing God*. Those who only believe *in* God (in the sense of believing He exists) are merely on the same level as demons ([James 2:19](#)).

**B. God speaks to Abram's doubt with a covenant.**

**1. ([Genesis 15:7-8](#)) Abram's doubts surface again.**

**Then He said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"**

a. **Then He said to him:** We don't know if the events beginning with [Genesis 15:7](#) followed close upon what happened in [Genesis 15:1-6](#); the flow of the text seems to indicate they did.

b. **I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it:** This wasn't the first time this promise was given (see also [Genesis 12:1-3](#), [12:7](#), and [13:15-17](#)). Yet this was a dramatic and clear restatement of God's promise to give the land to Abram and his covenant descendants.

c. **Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it:** The power and clarity of the promise makes us somewhat surprised by Abram's response. Abram boldly asked God for *proof* of the *promise*.

i. Though God had just accounted Abram as righteous, Abram could still demonstrate some degree of doubt, as indicated by his question, **"How shall I know that I will inherit it?"** Abram experienced what many of those who are accounted righteous do. It was as if he said, "I believe when I hear God say it, but five minutes later,

I'm not sure — please prove it to me.”

ii. “What! Abraham, is not God’s promise sufficient for thee? ... Ah, beloved! faith is often marred by a measure of unbelief; or, if not quite unbelief, yet there is a desire to have some token, some sign, beyond the bare promise of God.” (Spurgeon)

iii. Abram had no title deed to the land, no certificate of ownership that another person would recognize. Abram had nothing to make anyone else believe he actually owned the land. All he had was the promise of God.

## 2. ([Genesis 15:9-11](#)) Abram prepares to make a covenant with God.

**So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.**

a. **A three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon:** This reads more like a shopping list for a strange pagan ceremony than something the LORD would ask for. Yet Abram understood perfectly what God asked him to prepare for.

b. **Cut them in two... and placed each piece opposite the other:** Abram knew exactly what to do with these animals; he understood that according to the custom of his time, God told him to get a contract ready for signing.

i. In those days, contracts were made by the sacrificial cutting of animals, with the split carcasses of the animals lying on the ground. The covenant was made when parties to the agreement walked through the animal parts together, repeating the terms of the covenant. *The LORD made a covenant* in [Genesis 15:18](#) is literally, “the LORD cut a covenant.”

ii. [Jeremiah 34:18-20](#) makes reference to this same practice of a covenant made by cutting animals and repeating the oath of the covenant as one walks through the animal parts.

iii. The symbolism was plain. First, this is a covenant so serious, it is sealed with blood. Second, if I break this covenant, let this same bloodshed be poured out on my animals and me.

iv. When Abram had his doubts and wanted assurance from the LORD, God said to him clearly, “Let’s sign a contract and settle this once for all.”

c. **And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away:** As Abram waited for the LORD to appear and walk through the carcasses with him (to sign the covenant), God didn’t come right away. He had to wait and fight off the vultures until God appeared to complete the covenant ceremony.

i. Abram had reason to expect that God would come down and walk through the animal parts with him, because God had previously appeared to him in some way ([Genesis 12:7](#)). It seems that Abram knew that God was capable of taking some physical form.

## 3. ([Genesis 15:12-16](#)) Prologue to the covenant.

**Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is not theirs*, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”**

a. **Now when the sun was going down:** As evening came, God had not yet appeared to walk through the animal parts with Abram and seal the covenant. Instead, God caused a **deep sleep** to fall upon Abram. Apparently, at least part of what followed came to Abram in a dream while he was under this **deep sleep**.



b. **Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them:** Abram wanted concrete proof from God, and God would soon sign the covenant. Yet Abram needed to know he would have land and descendants, but all would not go well with his descendants in the future. This was a dreadful aspect to an amazing promise.

i. After God told him some of the hardship that would befall his descendants, Abram might have said, “If that is what is going to happen, I don’t want any children.” This was a complicated blessing.

c. **They will afflict them four hundred years:** Specifically, God told Abram of the slavery and hardship Israel would endure in Egypt ([Exodus 1:1-14](#)). Though the land was given to Abram and his covenant descendants, there would be this long period where they lived outside the land and in affliction. Yet after four generations they would **return here** (Canaan), and come **with great possessions**.

#### 4. ([Genesis 15:17-21](#)) The covenant is made.

**And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”**

a. **When the sun went down and it was dark:** As Abram was either asleep or perhaps still groggy from the deep sleep, he saw God do an amazing thing. Abram saw God pass through the animal parts all by Himself, while Abram watched on the sidelines.

b. **A smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces:** In walking through the sacrificed animals in the covenant ceremony, God represented Himself by two emblems — a **smoking oven and a burning torch**.

i. The **smoking oven** reminds us of the many times smoke or a cloud represented the presence of God:

As the pillar of cloud with Israel in the wilderness ([Exodus 13:21-22](#)).

As the smoke on Mount Sinai ([Exodus 19:18](#)).

As the cloud of God’s Shekinah glory ([1 Kings 8:10-12](#)).

ii. The **burning torch** reminds us of the many times fire represented the presence of God:

As the pillar of fire with Israel in the wilderness ([Exodus 13:21-22](#)).

As the burning bush displaying the presence of God before Moses ([Exodus 3:4](#)).

As the fire from heaven that at times consumed sacrifices that pleased God ([1 Kings 18:38](#), [1 Chronicles 21:26](#), [2 Chronicles 7:1](#)).

c. **On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram:** God, represented by the smoking oven and the burning torch, passed through the animal parts by Himself; as Abram watched, God showed this was a *unilateral* covenant. Abram never signed the covenant, because he passively watched while God signed it for both of them in the ritual.

i. Therefore, the certainty of the covenant God made with Abram is based on who God is, not on who Abram is or what Abram would do. This covenant could not fail, because God cannot fail.

ii. In a sense, the Father walked through the broken and bloody body of Jesus to establish His covenant with us, and God signed it for both of us. We merely enter into the covenant by faith; we don’t *make* the covenant with God.

d. **The LORD made a covenant with Abram:** By entering into this contract, there is a sense in which God said, “If I don’t keep My word, let *Me* be put asunder.” God put His Deity on the line as a confirmation of His

oath to Abram.

i. God alone signed this covenant; Abram did not haggle with God over the terms. God established and Abram accepted. Abram could not break a contract he never signed!

ii. "A Divine covenant is not a mutual agreement on equal terms between two parties, but a Divine promise assured." (Maclaren)

e. **I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates:** By quoting the specific lands Abram's descendants would inherit, God made it clear this was not a *figurative* spiritual promise. It was real, and through this promise, Israel would inherit real **land**.

i. "For a very brief time, under Solomon ([1 Kings 8:65](#)) and possibly again under Jeroboam II ([2 Kings 14:25](#)), the children of Israel ruled all this territory, as a token of the final and permanent possession they will have in the future." (Morris)