

Promises, Promises...

God as
Promise
Giver
&
Promise
Keeper

Session 3 • Abram/Abraham: Abram's Call and the Covenant of God



- I. A new point of departure in the divine unfolding of salvation—*Genesis 12:1-3*.
 - A. Abram's call—the actual promise in the form of a blessing (promise precedes the covenant)—*Genesis 12:2-3*.
 - Abram will be blessed, but so will other nations through the action.
 - B. The promise given to Abram has the effect of bringing salvation and judgment into history—Abram as mediator of blessing.
 1. Blessing outweighs judgment.
 2. “Bless” and “blessings”—*Genesis 12:2*.
 3. Bless “those” and curse “the one”—*Genesis 12:3*.
- II. God's promise and covenant with Abram—covenant formalizes the promise.
 - A. Yahweh is the divine protector and promiser—*Genesis 15:1-6*. [Yahwist document.]
 1. Abram demurs to the promise resignedly; he is skeptical—“What will you give me?”—no offspring...
 2. Reiteration of the divine promises—as the stars, so shall your descendants be—*Genesis 15:5*.

B. “Believed,” “reckoned,” and “righteousness”—*Genesis 15:6*.

1. “Believed”—act of trust, having faith in God’s unfolding plans for history; belief is something rather passive—*Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-12*.
2. “Reckoned”—declared by God, often the priestly functions, pronounced clean.
3. “Righteousness”—a term of relationship; Abram is righteous as he obeys and affirms the covenant and commandments—*Ezekiel 18:1-9*.

III. God’s promise and covenant—*Genesis 17:1-14*. [Priestly document.]

A. Covenant in the priestly document speaks of God only—not a word is said by Abram.

1. The actual call and promise in the Yahwistic account required only one verse—*Genesis 15:7*.
2. Here we read a long and ponderous speech from Yahweh.
3. In this passage, the making of the covenant consists of only God’s address: God makes the covenant; God declares the name change; God makes promises for the future; God promises land—*Genesis 17:1-8*.

B. Covenant turns to the human side, to the observances now falling on Abraham—*Genesis 17:9-14*.

1. “Circumcision”—the act of appropriating the witness.
2. The “rainbow” of the Noahic covenant was created by God; circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant required a human movement of faith.
3. A covenant in the flesh—refuse the sign and be cut off from community.
4. Circumcision, like baptism, is a *status confessionis*; it is a mark of distinction—this is who I am! (It could cost you your life—e.g. Nazi Germany checking for the circumcized.)

