

## Understanding the Old Testament 2

Let me review for you the overview of the Old Covenant. It begins with creation, the fall of man and the promise of a Savior (the seed). In 1800 years the earth becomes so violent and evil that the flood is the only solution. The flood is followed by the patriarchal period, that includes the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Genesis ends with the story of Joseph. 400 plus years in Egypt and the family of Jacob (Israel) had become a great nation. Moses led them 40+ years in the wilderness and received the laws for their nation. Joshua led them in the conquest of Canaan.

While in Canaan they were ruled by judges for 400 years. The last judge Samuel established a king at the demand of the people. Saul and David and Solomon were the three kings over the nation at the height of Israel's glory. After Solomon the nation is split into 10 northern tribes and two southern tribes. The northern tribes were taken into captivity after a series of idol worshipping kings. The southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin lasted another 100 years but were taken into captivity by Babylon. This was the period of 70 year captivity.

Medo-Persia conquered Babylon and returned the Jews to their land. This is called the restoration. Some of the prophets prophesied in this time, and Ezra and Nehemiah were written then. 400 years without a prophetic voice preceded the last prophet, John the Baptist and the New Covenant.

In addition to the three threads that run through the Old Covenant, we will also be noting the revelation of God and His character as evidenced by the revelation of His names.

After the flood, the sons of Noah and their wives received the first covenant, that of the rainbow and the promise not to destroy the earth by flood. Before long, the people of the earth got sidetracked and decided to build the Tower of Babel. They thought that they could reach God by building this high tower, and it would keep them together because they could see it from a great distance. God intervened by giving them multiple languages. The language groups took off together to develop their own areas.

Abram is the beginning of new era in human history. God called him to leave his people and go to a new land. In spite of Abram's failures to obey all that God asked, God reached out to him and made a covenant with him. In covenants of that day, both parties walked through the blood of animals that had been severed in half. It was a warning that whoever broke the covenant would suffer the same fate. But God put Abram in a trance and went through it alone. In other words, God pledged to be Abram's friend even if Abram did not abide by the covenant. Abram would not be responsible, God would. God promised to give Abram's descendents the land and bless the earth through them. Now we know the Seed that was promised is coming through Abram's lineage.

Abram worshiped God by the name JHWH. We would say Jehovah, but no one knows the pronunciation because the Hebrew leaves out the vowels. It is transliterated as Jehovah. It means the Eternal God, the One who was and is and is to come. He lives in the eternal now. He sees all time at an instant.

Now we come to a very important turning point. Abram was promised a son. He and his wife Sarah were aging and the promise did not happen. They took matters into their own hands and had Abram father a son through Sarah's servant woman, Hagar. This was common in that day, but it was not what God had asked. See Genesis 16. God revealed Himself to Hagar as the One that hears. The angel tells of the future of Ishmael's descendents. 16:12 Is that not how you see the Arab world today? God appeared to Abraham and told him again that he would have a son. He believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Sarah was 90 and Abraham 100. The son of promise was miraculously conceived and born, Isaac.

God entered into another covenant with Abram, the covenant of circumcision. See Genesis 17. It was then his name was changed to Abraham. It foreshadowed a tender heart toward God. It was then that God revealed Himself as El Shaddai, God Almighty, or the all-sufficient God.

JHWH spoke to Abraham and told him to take the son of promise, Isaac, to a mountain that was three days journey and sacrifice him there. Abraham did not hesitate. The surrounding people sacrificed their children to their gods. You might wonder why the God of the Bible would make such a strange request. God was testing Abraham's faith. Abraham believed in God's promise to bless the world through Isaac. He reasoned that if he sacrificed him, God would raise him from the dead. When he got to the mountain, he told his servants that they would return. The boy carried the wood. Abraham is well over 100 yet he bound the boy and laid him upon a rock to sacrifice him. As he raised the dagger, the angel of the Lord stopped him. Read Genesis 22:5-18. The story is filled with deep theology. Isaac is foreshadow of Christ. The mountain is the same one Christ was crucified on. Jesus is God's only Son. He carried his wood. He let himself be bound. God provided the sacrifice in the ram and in Jesus the real Lamb of God. Abraham declared that God's name is Jehovah Jireh, which means that the Lord provides. The ultimate provision was Jesus.

After Abraham provided a bride for his son (a picture of Christ and the church) The story moves to Isaac and Jacob. Abraham became known as the father of those who believe by faith. Because of the progressive revelation of God, we know that God would not ask the same thing of us, but He does test our faith. (Progressive revelation means that God has increasingly revealed more of His nature through the generations, and thus what is right and wrong.) Has God tested your faith? If you watch, I'm sure you will discover He is doing it quite often.

What are the names of God revealed in this portion of Scripture and what do they mean to you? Why is Genesis 15:6 so important to us? What does it say about salvation? Discuss the covenants that were made. If there is time, discuss God's heart in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. See Genesis 19.

Next: Isaac, Jacob and Esau.