

# UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

**A Simplified Look at a  
Complicated Belief**

**Part 1**

**Sessions 4-6**

## Review

-Sent out into the world, Adam and Eve give birth to two sons, Cain and Abel.

-Cain, a farmer, offers God a portion of his crops one day as a sacrifice

-Abel, a herdsman, presents God with the fattest portion of his flocks.

-Enraged, Cain kills his brother. God exiles Cain from his home to wander in the land east of Eden.

-Adam and Eve give birth to a third son, Seth.

-Through Seth and Cain, the human race begins to grow.

**Ten generations pass, and humankind becomes more evil.**

**-God begins to lament his creation and makes plans to destroy humankind completely.**

**-However, one man, Noah, has earned God's favor because of his blameless behavior.**

**-He instructs Noah to build an ark**

**-God sends a great flood to destroy the earth.**

**-Upon exiting the ark, God promises this new fertile earth for Noah and his family.**

**-Humans must not eat meat with blood still in it**

**-Anyone who murders another human must also be killed.**

**-God vows never to destroy the earth again**

**One night, Noah becomes drunk and lies naked in his tent:**

**-Ham, one of Noah's sons, sees his naked father and tells his brothers, Shem and Japeth**

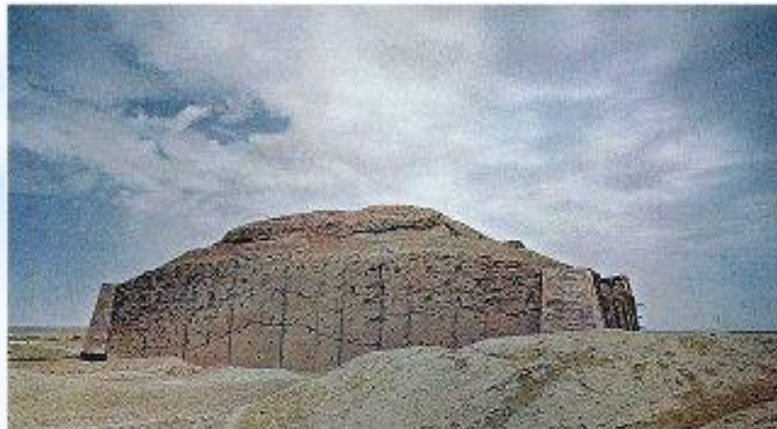
**-Shem and Japeth cover their father without looking at him  
Upon waking, Noah curses Ham's descendants, the Canaanites, for Ham's indiscretion, declaring that they will serve the future descendants of Ham's brothers**

**-Many generations pass and humankind again becomes corrupt**

**-Some men, having moved west to Babylon, attempt to assert their greatness and power by building a large tower that would enable them to reach the heavens**

**-Their arrogance angers God, who destroys the edifice. He scatters the people across the earth by confusing their common language, thus forever dividing humankind into separate nations**

# THE TOWER OF BABEL



# The Importance of Sacrifice

First Sacrifice is recorded in Genesis 3:21.

Remember the setting? Adam and Eve sinned against God, their eyes were opened, they realized they were naked, and they were ashamed.

So they tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. But fig leaves make lousy clothes.

So God intervened, sacrificed an animal, and made garments of skin for them.

***21 And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.***

This is the first sacrifice mentioned in the Bible. An innocent animal, most likely lamb, lost its life so that Adam and Eve could be covered.

Thus, as with all of God's institutions, it was established by God Himself.

## **Why did God require animal sacrifices in the Old Testament?**

**-God required animal sacrifices in the Old Testament because they represented the true sacrifice of God in the person of Jesus later in the New Testament.**

**-Those animal sacrifices were a temporary solution that pointed ahead to the permanent work of God in Christ. The shed blood on the cross, and of the O.T. animals, was necessary because God told us in Lev. 17:11,**

***-"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."***

**-Atonement is a cleansing, a removal of sin. So, animal sacrifices were a temporary atonement that foreshadowed the real and permanent atonement of Jesus, who is God in flesh (John 1:1,14).**



***"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"***

***Hebrews 9:11-14***



**To be in God's holy presence we must be without sin because God is Holy (1 Peter 1:16).**

**When a person sins there is a consequence for breaking the Law of God. That consequence is death (Genesis 2:17; Exodus 20:1-17; Romans 6:23) and separation from God (Isaiah 59:2).**

**On the cross, Jesus bore our sins in his body (1 Peter 2:24). Another way of looking at it is that he "became sin" (2 Corinthians 5:17), though he never committed sin (1 Peter 2:22).**

**So, when Jesus died on the cross, the Law of God was satisfied**

**But, God extends that death, that atoning sacrifice, to all who would receive it by faith, so that all believers are made right before God (Romans 5:1; Philippians 3:9).**

***"And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."***

***-Hebrews 9:15***

**Therefore, because Jesus died on the cross, we have a new covenant, a new contract with God where God gives us the righteousness of Christ (Philippians 3:9) and deliverance from eternal judgment.**

**The Old Testament**  
**UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY**  
**Part 4 – The Old Covenant - God's People**

**Abraham's relationship with God (Genesis 11:27-12:9)**

- Nine generations of Shem's descendants, the Semites, pass.**
  
- God calls on a man named Abram,**
  - father Terah**
  - wife Sarai**
  
- God makes a covenant with Abram, promising to make Abram's descendants into a great nation in a great land**
  
- Abram agrees to leave his home and move to Canaan with his wife and his nephew, Lot. Abram takes up residence there and erects a number of altars throughout the land as symbols of his devotion to God.**

**God accepts Abram because of his faith (Genesis 15:1-21)**

**-the significance of the “blood covenant”**

**Abram?? and Sarai?? disobey God – Ishmael is born (Genesis 16)**

**-Sarai cannot become pregnant**

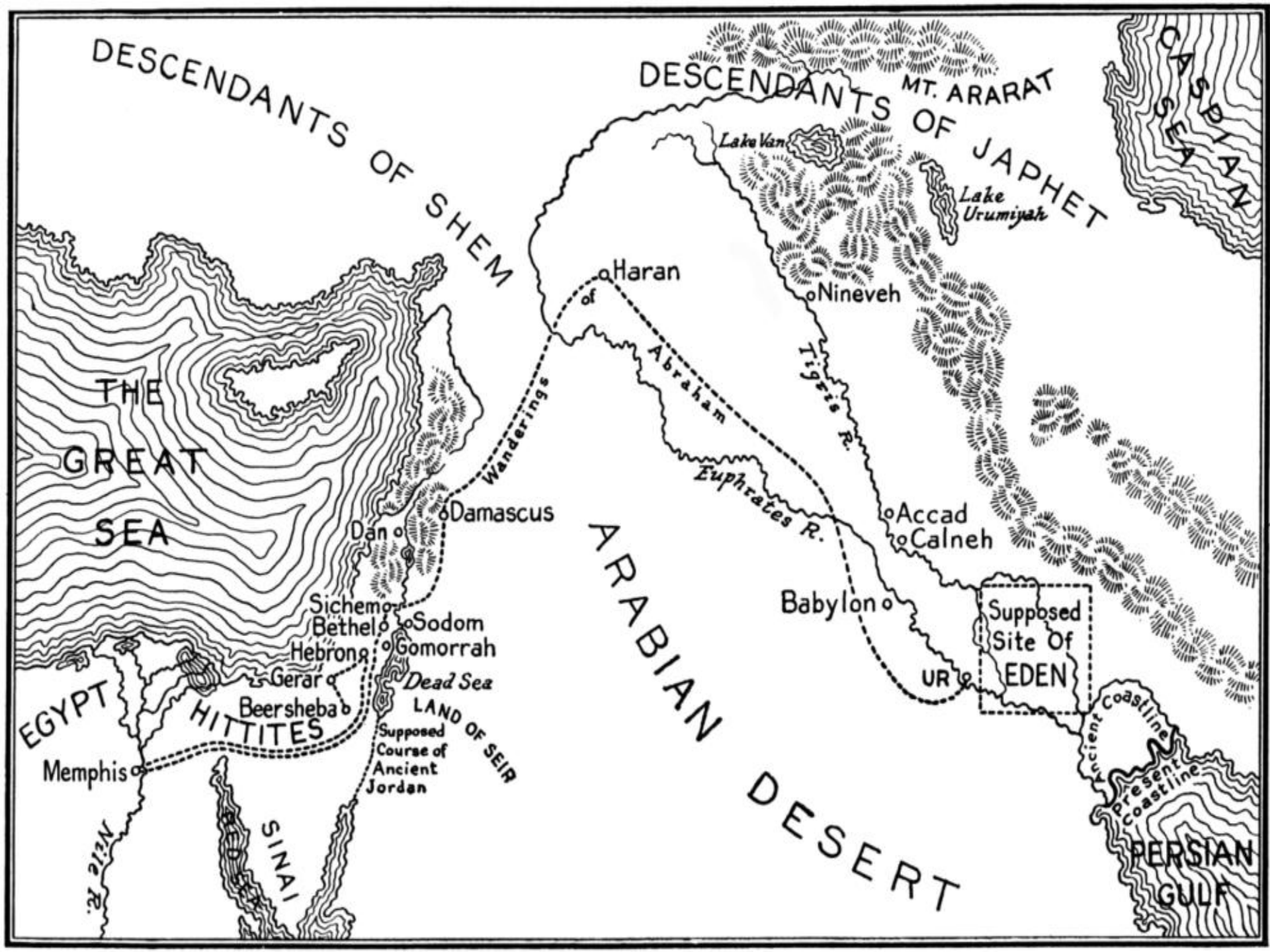
**-she sends her handmaiden Hagar to sleep with Abram.**

**-When Sarai becomes upset because of Hagar’s contempt, the handmaiden flees in fear. God speaks to Hagar and comforts her, promising her a son who will be a “wild ass of a man,” and Hagar returns to give birth to Abram’s first son, Ishmael (Genesis 16:12).**

**-God speaks with Abram, this time enjoining Abram to remain blameless in his behavior and adding a new requirement to his everlasting covenant.**

**-Abram and all his descendants must now be circumcised as a symbol of the covenant, and God promises Abram a son through Sarai.**

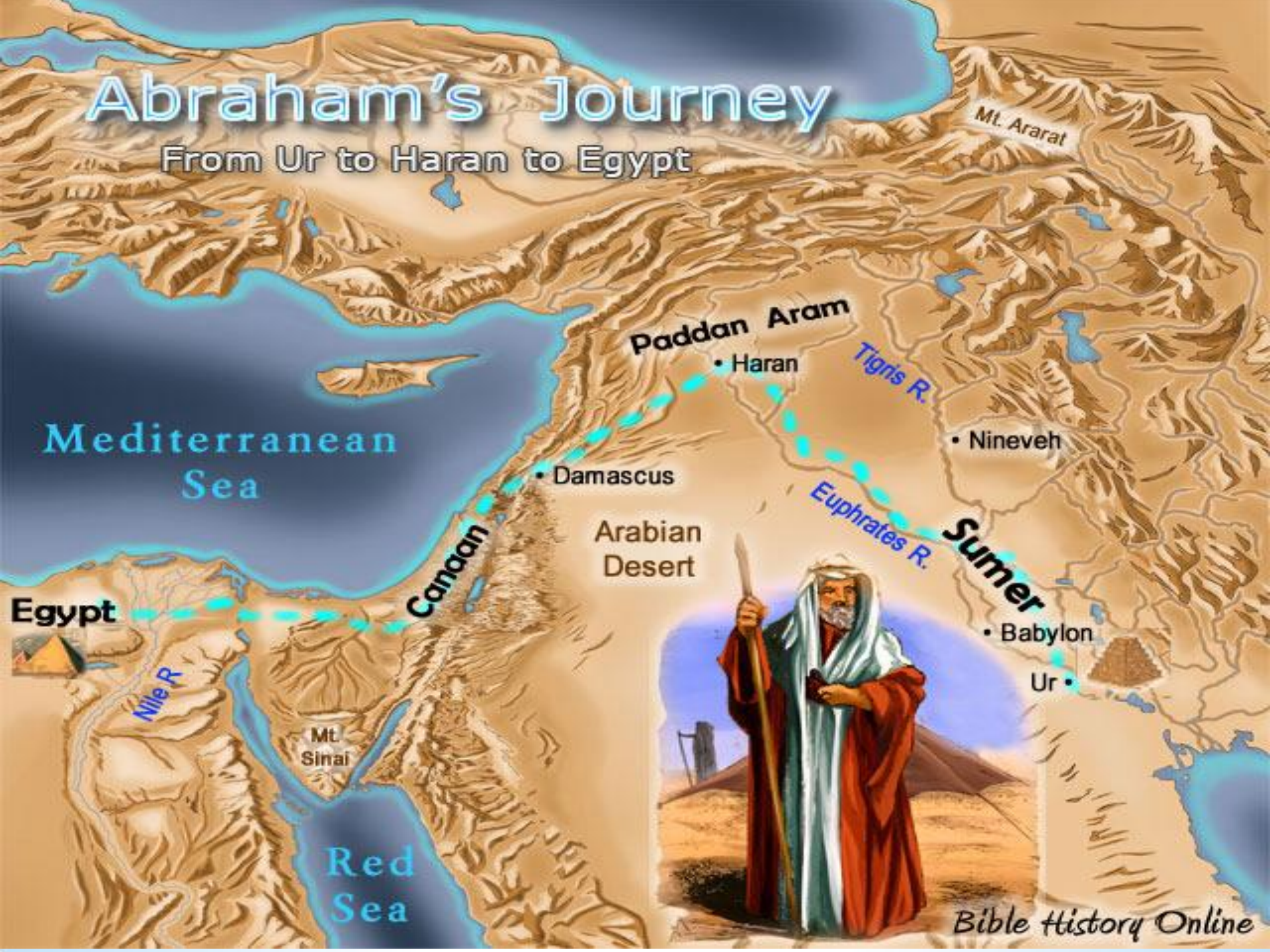
**-The son is to be called Isaac, and it will be through Isaac that the covenant is fulfilled.**





# Abraham's Journey

From Ur to Haran to Egypt



Mt. Ararat

Paddan Aram

• Haran

Tigris R.

• Nineveh

• Damascus

Arabian Desert

Sumer

• Babylon

Ur •

Mediterranean Sea

Canaan

Egypt

Nile R.

Mt. Sinai

Red Sea

Bible History Online



**God changed Abram "high father" name to "Abraham," "father of a multitude" (Genesis 17:1-5)**

*-17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. <sup>2</sup> I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants."  
<sup>3</sup> At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, <sup>4</sup> "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!<sup>5</sup> What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham,<sup>[a]</sup> for you will be the father of many nations.*

**God then changed Abraham's wife's name "Sarai," "my princess," to "Sarah," "mother of nations" (Genesis 17:15).**

*-15 Then God said to Abraham, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah.*

**We know from history that the descendants of Abraham and Sarah formed many nations, including the Jews' and Muslims'.**

## The birth of Isaac and a split in Abraham's family (Genesis 21:1-20)

*21 The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised.<sup>2</sup> She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. <sup>3</sup> And Abraham named their son Isaac. <sup>4</sup> Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.<sup>6</sup> And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. <sup>7</sup> Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!"*

## **God tests Abraham's Faith (Genesis 22:1-18)**

**-God asks Abraham to kill his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice.**

**-Abraham quietly resolves to obey**

**-Isaac is laid on the altar, and just as Abraham is ready to strike, the angel of the Lord stops him. God is impressed with Abraham's great devotion and, once again, reaffirms his covenant.**

**Three great religions - Christianity, Islam and Judaism - trace their spiritual heritage to Abraham.**

**-Ishmael had twelve sons who became princes of twelve Arabian tribes. The Muslims of today trace their heritage to Abraham through Ishmael.**

**-Isaac had twin sons - Esau and Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons who were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Jews trace their lineage to Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.**

**-Because of our own shared heritage with the Jews, Christians also count Abraham as their spiritual father.**

## **Key Questions:**

- **What is true faith in God like?**
- **How can God accept sinful people on the basis of faith?**
- **If God loves people of all nations, why does most of the Bible focus so much on just one nation?**

## **Abraham's Descendants (Genesis chapters 24-50)**

**-chart**

**Why did God choose one special nation?**

**-God didn't actually choose an existing nation when he struck a covenant with Abraham.**

**-there wasn't any nations with established and defined borders such as is common today. There only existed a network of city-states.**

**God's grace is received through faith on the basis of sacrifice**



**Key Lesson:**

**God chose Abraham to be the founder of His special nation, Israel**

**God accepted Abraham because of his faith.**

**The nation of Israel was chosen to witness about God to the other nations, to receive God's word and to bring a Savior for all nations into the world.**



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**Part 5 – The Old Covenant - God's Rule**

**Abraham's descendants in slavery (Exodus chapter 1)**

**Moses – leader of Israel**

**Living in the Desert as a shepherd – aged 40-80 years (Exodus 2:11-25)**

**Leading the People of Israel – aged 80-120 years (Exodus 3 - Deuteronomy 34)**

**God delivers His people from Slavery**

## **Key Questions:**

- **How can we know what is right and wrong?**
- **How can we recognize what sin is?**

**Key Lesson:**

**God gave His Law to the nation of Israel through Moses**

**God's Law shows us what is right and wrong (more accurately than our conscience) and what God is like.**

**When we compare ourselves with God's Law we realize how sinful we are and how much we need God's forgiveness.**

## **The Journey to Canaan (Numbers and Deuteronomy)**

**God gives His Law through Moses**

**Three Purposes for God's Law**





**UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY**  
**Part 6 – The Old Covenant 3 - God's Place**

**The conquest of the Land of Canaan [Joshua]**

**The Judges and the decision to have a King (Judges; I Samuel 1-8; Ruth)**

**The United Kingdom (I & II Samuel, I Kings 1-11, I Chronicles, II Chronicles 1-9)**

## **Key Question:**

- **If we have sinned against God how can we hope to have a good relationship with Him?**

David - a Man after God's own heart

Psalm 139 - David's Understanding of God

Psalm 51 - David's True Repentance

Psalm 23 - David's faith in (dependence on) God

The Temple and the City of Jerusalem

An Unsolved Problem

**Key Lesson:**

**God gave the Land of Canaan to the people of Israel**

**Although God's people (Israel) were now in God's place (Canaan) under God's rule (the Law), God's Kingdom could not be restored perfectly because of the problem of sin. A perfect sacrifice for sin was needed.**

