

Abraham in the New Testament

Studies to supplement the Sunday preaching on Abraham's life

Study 4 Abraham and the Covenant

At home: Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. Give some thought to the differences the Lord mentions here between the old and the new covenants.

1. Warm-up Question:
What do you think a 'covenant' is? In the group think up one or two examples from daily life. What practical thing might happen to indicate that a covenant is properly ratified?
2. In the group, read out **Luke 1:46-55** (Mary's song—the 'Magnificat')
Look at v54-55. Mary is thinking of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants. Do you remember from previous weeks what God had 'said to our fathers'? (try Genesis 12:1-3 if you're stuck)

3. Read out **Luke 1:67-79** (Zechariah's song—he had just become John the Baptist's father)

a) In v72 Zechariah says that the Lord is about to “remember his holy covenant”. How, according to vv68-71, does Zechariah think the Lord will remember it?

b) List the blessings that Zechariah has in mind in...

v68

v69

v71

v74a

v74b-75

v77

v78

v79

4. Notice from **Luke 1:55&73** that all of these blessing come on the people who have Abraham as their father. The Lord did not make the covenant just with Abraham; he made it also with all those who are descendants of the promise that he handed down through Abraham.

a) The following passages (among others) suggest that not all Abraham's 'descendants' are really proper descendants of Abraham. From Luke 3:8, John 8:39, Romans 9:7-8 and Galatians 3: 7&29 describe who might be in which group:

False descendants of Abraham	Proper descendants of Abraham

Which one of these two groups has the covenant promises?

5. Read out **Mark 14:22-25**.

When a man and a woman marry each other in church they do certain things: they hold hands, they exchange rings, and they make vows to each other. These are ordinary, everyday occurrences; but when the intention is marriage, and an authorized person is present, these ordinary things constitute a covenant: the man and the woman become husband and wife.

In the Last Supper the disciples do ordinary things. But because Jesus is the person authorised to bring in the New Covenant, because they drink from the cup and eat the bread with covenant-intention, the disciples here are being included in the covenant Jesus is making with them.

a) From v22, when the disciples bit into the bread Jesus had broken for them, what crime were they admitting to?

- b) From v24 what is Jesus's side of the covenant? In what way is he promising to fulfil the covenant?

 - c) From vv23-24 (and from Mark 10:45), what benefit does the covenant provide for the disciples?
6. Spend a moment or two discussing the cost of the covenant to Jesus and to us, and also the benefits of the covenant, to Jesus and to us.

Write down any personal reflections you might have on this.

7. In Jeremiah 31:33 the Lord says, “I will be their God, and they will be my people.” Spend some quiet time in the group meditating on Jeremiah 31:31-34. Think particularly of what it cost God to make good this promise.