

Week 8 The World After the Flood

The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes. Psalm 119:64

Q29 What did God ask Abraham to do?

A God asked Abraham to leave his country for a new country.

Q 30 What did God promise to Abraham?

A God promised Abraham a land, a nation, a name, and a blessing.

Q31 How was God going to bless Abraham's family?

A God promised he would have too many descendents to count.

Q32 Through which son of Abraham did God make a covenant?

A God's covenant would come through Isaac.

Tips for using this catechism and devotional:

1. Read all the questions and answers on Monday, so that the scope of the week's concepts will be introduced.
2. Each day begin with the memory verse for the week. Read it, and take a moment to work on memorizing it. By the end of the week, you should have it memorized with a little effort.
3. Read the Scripture reading for the day.
4. Ask the Question for the day, and read the answer. Memorize the answer, so that when the question is asked, the answer comes automatically.
5. Read the commentary. If you have young children, you may need to either explain the "Thinking Deeper" section, or skip it and come back to it when the children get older.
6. Each day review the catechism questions that have been learned from the previous days of the week. On Friday, review all of the questions.
7. Close with prayer

Monday Week 8 God's Chosen People

Romans 4:33 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Bible Reading: Gen.12:1;Heb.11:8-11

Q29 What did God ask Abraham to do?

A God asked Abraham to leave his country for a new country.

Jenny was excited to be going on the trip. She and her father and mother, and her sisters and brothers had all left their home in Russia. They were on their way to America. After a trip on the train, they were now getting on a ship that would cross the big Atlantic Ocean. When they came to New York Harbor, they would see the Statue of Liberty. The adventure of a new country with a new language and new ways was ahead of her and her family. Best of all, the family would be free to worship God. They were leaving a communist country that taught against God, to a free country where people could freely obey the Bible.

When God called Abraham to go to a new country, He was giving Abraham a chance to start a new life. Abraham didn't know everything that was ahead, but he believed God would guide him. Abraham obeyed God because he believed.

Thinking Deeper

Using Abraham as an example, Dr. Allan Brown has described faith as having three characteristics: 1) believing what God says, 2) obeying what God commands, and 3) trusting what God promises. Abraham somehow knew that God was speaking to him when he left Haran to go to the promised land. We "having a more sure word of prophecy" in the inspired scriptures are blessed with the clear written record of what God has said.

Some attacks on the Christian belief system attempt to undermine the truth of the Bible by claiming it has been changed over time to fit with prejudice of church leaders and their hunger for power (as in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*.) These attacks are based on a basic misunderstanding of how we got the Bible, and how it has been preserved (or, as in Dan Brown's case, a not so hidden agenda to promote the ancient heresy of Gnosticism.) The writings of the church fathers show that from the beginnings of the church the books included in our Bible now were the ones they considered to be inspired in the early days of the church. And as far as the Bible being changed by some unscrupulous church leaders, the mountains of manuscript evidence in existence are testimony to the reliability of the Bible. The evidence shows that the Bible is remarkably unchanged.

Our enemy knows that if we doubt the truth of the Bible, then we have little reason to trust the Bible's promises or to obey its commands. On the other hand, since we have good reason to trust the Bible's reliability, our foundation of faith is strong. We can, like Abraham, believe what God says.

Tuesday Week 8 God's Chosen People

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Romans 4:3)

Bible Reading: Gen. 12:2-3

Q 30 What did God promise to Abraham?

A God promised Abraham a land, a nation, a name, and a blessing.

The phone rang and Colin answered. It was his dad. "When I come home, we're going fishing. Get your things ready." Colin hung up the phone. He was excited. He loved to fish. He got the poles and fishing box and took them to where the boat was tied. Then he got his hat and some sunscreen. He wanted to be ready when his father came home. It wasn't long until his father came home, and in just a few minutes they were in the boat. Colin was happy that he had everything ready. Going fishing with his dad was one of his favorite things to do. Because he believed what his father promised him, he had gotten everything ready and they were on their way.

Abraham heard the voice of the Lord. God made him some promises. Because Abraham believed God, he was ready to do what God told him to do. If we really believe God like Abraham did, we will do what He tells us to do.

Thinking Deeper

"God said it. I believe it. That settles it for me." This piece from a song provoked a response from someone who slightly reworded the concept. "God said it. That settles it." From the first statement, one can infer that the issue is based on one's belief. From the second, one can infer that the issue is based on the word of God. What is important in either statement is the context.

There is often a problem with songs, in that a phrase without a context becomes part of the thinking in the minds of people. If truth is based on my belief (as in the first phrase), then I am falling into the trap of existentialism, which holds that truth is authenticated by my experience. On the other hand, if the meaning is that God's truth is appropriated to me by faith, then that is a different matter.

Some things God has said are true and will come to pass regardless of my belief or my unbelief. Since He said it, that settles it. God's covenant of the rainbow is such a truth. No one's belief or unbelief affects that promise of God. But some things God has said will not come to pass unless there is faith. The conditional promises of God are dependent upon belief. In Abraham's case, God's promise was conditional. If Abraham go to the country God showed him, God would give him the blessings He promised.

God's truth is not based on our belief or unbelief. It stands because it is true. But the benefits of God's truth to us as individuals only come as we appropriate God's promises by faith.

Wednesday Week 8 God's Chosen People

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Romans 4:33

Bible Reading: Gen. 15:1-6

Q31 How was God going to bless Abraham's family?

A God promised he would have too many descendants to count.

Grandpa's favorite pictures were of family reunions when the whole family was together. He had large pictures of different reunions in various rooms of his house. He liked to take visitors to these pictures and point out his children and grandchildren. He could tell you how many there were in the family and he knew them all by name. He was thankful for every one of them, and when he prayed he would often say, "Don't let a one of them miss Heaven."

Grandpa was like Abraham in this way. One of his best blessings was his large family. At first, Abraham was afraid he would not have children. He was old and only had servants in his house. But God promised him a blessing. His family was going to be really big!

Thinking Deeper

For some time in America it has been assumed that the ideal family has a father, a mother and two children. Families with four or more children are certainly not mainstream. This attitude has permeated much of American life. Children are to be planned at the convenience of the parents. The organization, Planned Parenthood, has enjoyed favorable public opinion because its very name has ridden the wave of the popularization of small and planned families. The slogan "Every child a wanted child," also part of the equation, gives cover to the abortion complex of the culture. If a child is going to be an inconvenience, then it should be aborted. Otherwise, it could be born into a family where it might be abused. (Isn't the irony overwhelming: kill the baby so it won't be abused!) The underlying reason for this whole way of thinking is that the needs and wants of parents should be primary. Children are not to be on the scene if it inconveniences the adults. Their value is in how much they make the parents look or feel good. What a contrast to God's view of children.

When God told Abraham he was going to bless him, he told him he would have children. Children, in God's eyes were not a curse or an inconvenience, but a blessing. The Bible makes that case over and over again. "Children are an heritage of the Lord." "The fruit of the womb *is* his reward." "Happy *is* the man that hath his **quiver full** of them."

God calls children a blessing. When the culture sees them as a curse, then the culture is wrong. Christians' love, care and nurture of children is a strong testimony to the culture that we reject their world view and that we agree with God.

Thursday Week 8 God's Chosen People

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Romans 4:33

Bible Reading: Gen. 17:15-21

Q32 Through which son of Abraham did God make a covenant?

A God's covenant would come through Isaac.

An elderly widow woman in Mississippi looked out her window after Hurricane Katrina. Many trees had been blown over leaving her land in a big mess. One very large tree was leaning on her roof. She had no idea what she was going to do. That afternoon, something happened that she didn't expect. Some Christian men who had heard about her need came with large equipment and began moving the trees. Another group of Christian volunteers arrived with chain saws and rakes and helped remove the brush and smaller trees. The widow stood outside her house and wept with joy. She had received an unexpected blessing.

Abraham and Sarah thought they were too old to be parents. One day they received a great surprise from God. He told them they would have a son and they were to name him Isaac. God promised them an unexpected blessing.

Thinking Deeper

The Bible makes it clear that God's blessing on the world would come through Isaac. Abraham had a son to Hagar, his wife's servant, and they named him Ishmael. When God gave Abraham the promise for a son with his wife, Abraham wanted God to consider Ishmael. "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" God remembered Ishmael and promised that he would be blessed and have many descendents. However, God's plan for blessing the world was to be through Isaac. "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac."

God had promised Abraham that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." That special covenant blessing was to come through Isaac. How was it to happen? One way was that God used the descendents of Isaac to be the ones that received the inspired Word of God. The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, was written almost exclusively by the descendents of Isaac, and more specifically by the descendents of Isaac's second son Jacob, later called Israel. The Bible has blessed people the world over for multiplied generation.

Another way that all families are blessed is that "the seed of Abraham," the Lord Jesus Christ, is the savior of all who will believe in him. Jesus, the promised messiah, is a descendent of Isaac through his son Jacob, and more specifically through Jacob's son Judah. So we have this definite line of blessing: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah. Through that line would come the Lord Jesus, the gift of God, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Friday Week 8 God's Chosen People

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Romans 4:33

(Review the Week's Questions)

When he was a little boy, Stephen heard about a neighbor man who died. He looked up into the big sky and made a wish. "I wish I would never have to die. I wish I could live forever." When he grew older, he still had a desire in his heart to live forever. But he didn't know anything about the Bible or about Jesus. After he grew up, he went to a Bible conference. He heard about Jesus and how on the cross Jesus died for his sins. His family was not Christian. He wasn't a Christian. But he decided he very much wanted Jesus to be his savior. Would Jesus save someone from his kind of background? Yes! When he opened his heart, Jesus came in. Now Stephen had the hope of eternal life, because Jesus promised "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Who can become a chosen one of God? The Bible says, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." When you believe God like Abraham did, God will count you righteous just like he counted Abraham righteous.

Thinking Deeper

John Calvin was a theologian in the 16th Century who considered the issue of predestination. St. Augustine dealt with this issue in the Fourth Century but did not develop it in the same detail or with quite the same emphasis as Calvin did many years later. Calvin came to the conclusion that God chose some to be saved and some to be lost. The person had no real choice in the matter. Hence the Calvinist term "unconditional election." Calvin's view of grace and God's sovereignty forced him to his conclusion about election.

The concept of God's foreknowledge is a difficult concept because we, as humans, see things from our time-bound perspective. God has no such limitations. He "sees the end from the beginning." John Wesley considered this in his message "On Predestination," where he compared the relationship of events and God's knowledge of them. "We must not think they are because he knows them. No: he knows them because they are." In other words, God, who inhabits eternity, knows everything simultaneously in past, present and future. But His knowledge does not cause them, any more than our knowledge that the sun will rise tomorrow causes it. Therefore, God's invitation to the world to come to Him for salvation is not reserved for a select few that God causes to be saved. Your decision to accept Jesus as savior is not forced on you by God's foreknowledge. Rather, your decision now is what God saw from His eternal perspective. His invitation is open: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

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