

Children of the Promise



SABBATH—APRIL 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 15:1–3; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Exodus 19:5, 6; Genesis 12:2.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of time’ ” (Matthew 28:20, ERV).

A FATHER AND HIS TEN-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER spend their holiday at the seashore. One day, they go swimming in the sea. They are both good swimmers. But they get separated after they swim far away from the beach. The father knows that the waves pull them both out to sea. So, he shouts to his daughter: “Mary, I am going to swim back to the beach to get help. If you get tired, lie on your back. You can float all day that way. I will come back for you.

“Soon many people in boats search the water for one small girl. Hundreds of people stand on the beach. The people heard the news about the little girl and waited for someone to find her. Four hours later, someone in a boat finds her. She is far away from land. She calmly floats on her back. She is not afraid at all. The people on the beach cry tears of joy when the little girl comes back. The child is very calm. She thinks everyone is behaving in a strange way. She says, ‘Father told me I can float all day on my back. He also told me not to worry. He will come for me. So, I just swam and floated because I trusted him to come back for me.’ ”—H. M. S. Richards, “When Jesus Comes Back,” *Voice of Prophecy News*, March 1949, page 5, adapted.



“ ‘If you get tired, lie on your back. . . . I will come back for you.’ ”

“ ‘I WILL DEFEND YOU’ ” (Genesis 15:1, ICB)

“After these things happened, the Lord spoke his word to Abram in a vision [special dream]. God said, ‘Abram, don’t be afraid. I will defend you. And I will give you a great [very big] reward’ ” (Genesis 15:1, ICB).

Read Genesis 15:1–3. What is the first thing that the Lord says to Abram? Why do you think the Lord says this? What reasons does Abram have for being afraid?

Do you see that the Lord says to Abram “I will defend you”? The word “you” is very interesting. “You” is a pronoun. This part of speech shows us that God wants to have a personal friendship with Abram. The word “you” also shows us that God will talk with Abram One-on-one or Person to person. That is how God will communicate with all of us.

The NIV writes Genesis 15:1 this way: “ ‘Abram, do not be afraid. I am like [the same as] a shield to you. I am your very great [big] reward’ ” (Genesis 15:1, NIV). Do you see that God compares Himself to a shield? In what way is God the same as a shield to Abram? Think about what you know about shields already. What do they do? They protect our bodies from attacks by our enemy, right? We can hide behind shields when we are attacked. They will keep us safe. God shows that He will keep Abram safe from hurt. He will protect and defend Abram in the same way as a shield.

The first time the word “shield” is written in the Bible is in Genesis 15:1. Yes, other Bible writers say that God acts the same as a shield (Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 18:30; Psalm 84:11; Psalm 144:2). But Genesis 15:1 is the only time that God names Himself the Shield of someone.

When God names Himself the Shield of someone, what does that show us? Does it show something to Abram that it may not show us now? Is this promise for us, too? Can we ask God to be our Shield? Does this promise say that nothing will ever hurt us? Explain. How is God the same as a shield? What does this word picture mean to you?

“Jesus cares for us. His love for us is stronger than the love of a mother for her child. . . . Our Savior watches over you. He will protect you and make you safe.”—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, page 77, adapted.



We can hide behind shields when we are attacked.

THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOR: PART 1 (Genesis 28:14)

“ ‘All the families on earth will be blessed because of you and your descendants [future children]’ ” (Genesis 28:14, ERV).

“You belong to Christ [Jesus], so you are Abraham’s descendants [future children]. You get all of God’s blessings because of the promise that God made to Abraham” (Galatians 3:29, ERV).

God tells Abraham many times that the people on the earth will be blessed because of the family of Abraham. (Read Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18; Genesis 22:18.) Why does God make this same promise so often to Abraham? Because this promise is the most important promise that God makes him. What does this promise show us exactly? It shows us that God will choose the children of Abraham to be His special people: the Jews. God will teach the Jews about Himself. Then the Jews will teach all the families on the earth about God and His plan to save them from sin. God keeps His promise by sending Jesus. Jesus comes from the family of Abraham to teach the people on the earth about God. Jesus shows everyone the love of God when He dies on the cross. On the cross, Jesus pays for the sins of all the families on the earth.



Everyone who accepts Jesus as his Savior is part of the family of Abraham.

Think about the promises that God makes after the Flood when He makes His special agreement with Noah. God promises not to destroy the earth with water again. What good is this promise without the promise that Jesus saves us from sin? What good are any of the promises of God without the promise of everlasting life?

What does it mean that God will bless all the families of the earth because of Abraham?

The biggest and best promise from God is the promise that He will send a Savior. Everyone who accepts Jesus as his or her Savior is part of the family of Abraham. Because God sees us as the children of Abraham, we get the blessing that God promised to Abraham (Galatians 3:8, 9, 27–29). What is that promise? It is the promise of everlasting life. It is the promise of a life with no sin, evil, pain, and suffering. Can you think of a better promise than that?

THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOR: PART 2
(1 Thessalonians 4:16–18)

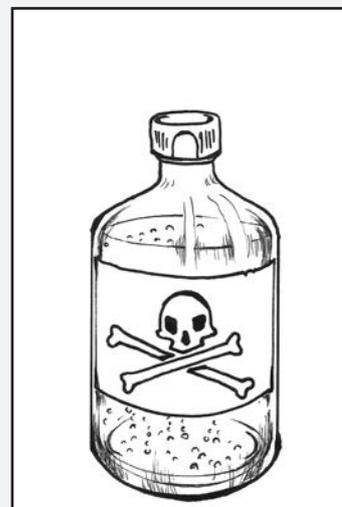
“What must we do if we want to have real happiness? We must travel into a very far country. We must be willing to do things we have never done before.”—Thomas Browne, adapted.

Look at the quote by Thomas Browne above. Do you agree with it or disagree? How do 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18 and Revelation 3:12 help you to know the answer?

Augustine writes about the sin problem that is part of human life: “This life of ours is filled with evil. From the start, we see that the human family is cursed. First, think about the problems that happen because of everything we need to know and do not know. Then, think about all those empty and silly things that we love so much. Our love for these cheap things is the same as drinking poison. This love will cause us heartache, sorrow, and fear. Some humans feel joy when they fight wars, kill, and cause disagreements. Other people love to steal. Human hearts everywhere are filled with pride, greed, and law breaking. People sin against God and religion all the time. They lie and hurt their neighbors. They cheat and break stuff that belongs to other people. Some humans force other people to have sex with them. Other people have sex with their own family members. Some of these sins are too nasty and evil to talk about. All these sins and secret wishes in the human heart are wrong. Worse, the courts are not just or fair. Crime fills the earth. But no one pays any attention.” —Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, Gerald G. Walsh, translator (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1958), book 22, chapter 22, page 519, adapted.

Augustine wrote this more than 1,500 years ago. But it shows the crime that happens in many modern cities today, right? Humans have not changed very much. That is why people want to escape from the evil in this life.

We have good news. Maybe our life is hard now. But the future looks wonderful because of Jesus. Jesus lived, died, and came back to life for us. He saves us from our sin. He serves in heaven right now as our High Priest. A high priest is a chief religious leader. As our High Priest, Jesus keeps the promise that God made to Abraham and to his future children. Jesus helps us to come to the Father to get mercy and forgiveness from sin.



“Our love for these cheap things is the same as drinking poison.”

A SPECIAL AND POWERFUL PEOPLE (Exodus 19:5, 6)

God makes Abraham a promise. God will bless all humans because of Abraham. The Lord also says that the future children of Abraham will become a “ ‘great [special] and powerful nation [people group]’ ” (Genesis 18:18, ERV; read also Genesis 12:2; Genesis 46:3). This is a big promise for God to make to Abraham. Abraham is married to a woman who is too old to have children. So, when Abraham has no children, not even a son, God makes Abraham this big promise!

The promise does not happen fully when Abraham is alive. Later, Isaac and Jacob do not see the promise happen. God tells Jacob that the promise will come to pass in Egypt (Genesis 46:3). Jacob goes to Egypt. But he really does not see the promise happen fully. Of course, God keeps His word later. But the promise does not happen right away.

Why does the Lord want to make a special people from the children of Abraham? What special work will the Jews do for God? For the answers, read Exodus 19:5, 6; Isaiah 60:1–3; and Deuteronomy 4:6–8. Write your answers below:



“The animal offerings that the Jews bring to God as part of their worship show the future death of Jesus on the cross.”

God has a plan for Israel. He wants them to teach people about Himself. If Israel will teach people on the earth about God, then God will bless Israel. Israel will be a happy, healthy, and holy people. They will show the blessing that comes from obeying God. Then people from all over the earth will accept the Lord and worship Him (Isaiah 56:6, 7). In this way, humans will come to Israel to learn about God and the coming Savior, who will be born a Jew.

“God gives land to the people of Israel. This land belongs to other people. If the people who own this land refuse to worship and serve God, then God will give their land to the Jews. God has a special plan for the Jews. He wants His people to teach the people near them about God. God also wants all the people on earth to come to Him. The animal offerings that the Jews bring to God as part of their worship show the future death of Jesus on the cross. This teaching shows other people that Jesus will take away their sin. God will give everlasting life to everyone who accepts Jesus as his or her Savior.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 290, adapted.

“ ‘I WILL MAKE YOU FAMOUS’ ” (Genesis 12:2, ICB)

“ ‘I will build a great [special and important] nation from you. I will bless you and make your name famous. People will use your name to bless other people’ ” (Genesis 12:2, ERV).

“In Genesis 12:2, God promises to make the name of Abram famous. Why does the Lord want to do that for any sinner, even if that person obeys Him and shows faith? Can anyone do anything to earn honor or fame from God? (Read Romans 4:1–5 and James 2:21–24.) Does God give fame to Abram so that Abram can please himself and do whatever he wants? Or does the gift of fame show us something more about the plan of God for the human family? Explain.

Compare Genesis 11:4 with Genesis 12:2. In what big way are these two verses different from each other? How does one verse show the idea that we are “saved by our good behavior”? How does the other verse show that we are “saved by faith”?

God saves us by His mercy. But we must do our part. We must choose to accept Jesus. God cannot force us to make Him our Savior. Remember, the worldwide war between Jesus and Satan happens all around us. We are a part of this fight. The choices we make show which side we are on. Both humans and angels watch what we do in this war (1 Corinthians 4:9). Who we are, what we say, and what we do are important. By our words, actions, and our feelings, too, we can help bring praise and honor to the Lord. Or we can bring shame on God and His name. So, when the Lord tells Abram that He will make him famous, the Lord does not mean what humans mean when they talk about someone being famous. What makes the name of someone excellent in the eyes of God? An excellent name means a person shows faith. He or she obeys God. He or she has a heart with no pride. This person loves other people. Sure, people on this earth respect all these things. But in their eyes, these things do not make a person famous. In the eyes of God, these things do.

Who are some famous people today? What makes them famous? Now compare them to Abraham. How does this show us the wrong ideas that people today have about fame?



When the Lord tells Abram that He will make him famous, the Lord does not mean what humans mean when they talk about someone being famous.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Abraham in Canaan,” page 132–144 and “The Test of Faith,” pages 145–155, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“God gives Abraham a test. This test is not easy. God asks Abraham to give up something very big. . . . Abraham does not wait to obey God. Abraham does not question God about the land of promise. . . . It is enough that God gives Abraham His promise. As the servant of God, Abraham must obey. The happiest place on earth for Abraham is the place where God wants him to be.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 126, adapted.

Abram enters Canaan. Then the Lord shows Himself to Abram. The Lord tells Abram that Abram will travel all over the land. But God will give the land to the future children of Abram (Genesis 12:7). God makes this promise several times (read Genesis 13:14, 15, 17; Genesis 15:13, 16, 18; Genesis 17:18, 19; Genesis 28:13, 15; Genesis 35:12). Four hundred years later, God keeps His promise (Genesis 15:13, 16). The Lord announces to Moses that He will bring Israel out of Egypt into a land filled with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8, 17; Exodus 6:8). God makes the same promise to Joshua (Joshua 1:3). In David’s time, most of this promise happens (Genesis 15:18–21; 2 Samuel 8:1–14; 1 Kings 4:21; 1 Chronicles 19:1–19).

Now read Hebrews 11:9, 10, 13–16. These verses show us that Abraham and the other Old Testament fathers saw the land of Canaan as a word picture. Canaan showed them the future home of all humans that God saves. Because of sin, no home we have will continue forever. This earth is filled with change and ruin. But we have the promise of a future life with Jesus. This promise helps our hearts to stay steady and full of faith.



Here on earth, we do not have a city that lasts forever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How should the promise of a new earth make our Christian experience stronger? (Compare Matthew 5:5; 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18; Revelation 21:9, 10; Revelation 22:17.)
- ② “The fame and honor that counts in the eyes of God comes from obeying His law and living His plan for our lives.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 1, page 293, adapted. What does this quotation mean?

Summary: Promises! They are precious to the Christian! Will God make them happen? Our faith says that the answer is Yes.

TRUSTING GOD OR SCIENCE

The doctor shows the X-rays of the unborn baby to Hernando Diaz.

“You are a doctor, too,” the doctor says to Hernando. “Here is the proof you need to end the life of this baby now.”

Erica, the wife of Hernando, cries. The X-rays show their baby has Potter’s syndrome. Potter’s syndrome causes a baby to grow with kidneys that do not work right. Potter’s syndrome also causes a baby to grow with arms and legs that do not have a normal shape, a strange looking face, and eyes that are too far apart.

As a doctor himself, Hernando understands that the advice the doctor gave him is correct. But as a Christian, Hernando wonders about the right thing to do. The baby is only 32 weeks old. The baby will not live if it stays in the belly of his wife. But if Hernando and Erica wait, there may be hope for their baby. Should Hernando trust science or God? “God will have the last word,” Hernando tells the doctor.

Soon, Erica gets sick. The doctor wants to do a special operation to save her life. The doctor will remove the baby before it is ready to be born. Hernando and Erica pray for their baby. Their church prays too. Family and nurses and doctors scold Erica for not removing her baby sooner.

Two days before the operation, the doctor takes another X-ray of the baby. The X-ray shows that nothing has changed. That night, Erica has a dream. She sees a baby boy playing in a basket. Someone in the dream tells her husband, “Take your son. He is a gift from God. You shall name him Samuel David. Teach him to love God and obey His commandments.”

Erica and Hernando believe the dream shows that their baby will live. For the first time, they buy diapers and toys for their baby. But the next day, they get ready for the worst. The doctor explains that he will do the special operation. Then he will cut the special tube inside Erica to the baby that keeps the baby alive. After that, the baby will die in a few minutes.

The operation should take only 20 to 30 minutes. Hernando sits in the waiting room for 30 minutes . . . then 40 minutes . . . then 50 minutes. Hernando starts to worry after a whole hour. Then he hears screams. But they are not from his wife or their baby. They are from the doctor and the nurses. They all scream in surprise. They expect a baby with a strange shape. But what they find is a perfect baby boy.

“It is not possible!” the doctor says. “It is a miracle!”

Hernando and Erica want to raise Samuel David to love God and obey His law. Today, Hernando and Erica say that the story about their son has led many people to Jesus.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



“Here is the proof you need to end the life of this baby now.” The X-rays show their baby has Potter’s syndrome.

