

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Genesis, Session 23, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen 15, 17 and Akedah (Gen. 22) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Genesis, Session 23, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen 15, 17 and Akedah, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Robert Vannoy examines the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis, focusing on its promises regarding land and descendants. The lecture explores the covenant's multiple reiterations in Genesis 15, 17, and 22, analyzing the significance of the covenant sign of circumcision and its spiritual counterpart. The text further discusses the theological implications of Abraham's obedience in the Akedah (binding of Isaac), balancing God's sovereignty with human responsibility. Finally, the lecture connects the Abrahamic Covenant to the New Covenant, highlighting the continuity and differences in their administration.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Genesis, Session 23 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).



**Vannoy_Genesis_Se
ssion23.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 23, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen 15, 17 and Akedah (Gen. 22)

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Robert Vannoy:

Briefing Document: Dr. Vannoy on the Abrahamic Covenant

Overall Theme: The lecture focuses on the Abrahamic Covenant as a central theme in the Old Testament, exploring its various aspects, promises, signs, and reaffirmations. It also examines the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility within the covenant framework, particularly highlighting the role of Abraham's obedience.

Key Concepts and Ideas:

- **Genesis 15: Covenant Ratification and Theophany**
The Smoking Furnace: The passage in Genesis 15, involving a smoking furnace and a flaming torch passing between dismembered animals, is interpreted as a "self-malediction" of the Lord. This is a symbolic representation of God taking upon himself the covenant's curse, showcasing a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice.
 - *Quote: "There in the passage God in the divided theophanic symbol of a smoking furnace and flaming torch between the dismembered creature, the mystery of the abandonment of the Son of God emerged beforehand."*
 - **Land Promise:** God's promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants is reiterated, with boundaries stretching from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River. These boundaries are repeated in other OT books like Deuteronomy and Joshua.
 - *Quote: "Unto your seed I have given the land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates."*
 - **Fulfillment of the Land Promise:** The promise of the land was partially fulfilled under Joshua, and then more fully under David and Solomon, though even then the borders were not complete in the sense of being fully and permanently held.
1. **Genesis 17: Covenant Renewal and Circumcision**
- **Covenant Confirmed and Renewed:** The covenant is confirmed and renewed, marking a significant moment in God's relationship with Abraham. This covenant

renewal occurs 13 years after the birth of Ishmael and 24 years after the initial promise of a seed, when Abraham is 99.

- **Name Change:** Abraham's name is changed from Abram ("God is exalted") to Abraham ("father of many nations"), emphasizing his role in God's plan.
- **Circumcision:** Circumcision is instituted as a "token" or sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. It is mandatory for all male children, including slaves within his household, and becomes an "everlasting covenant."
- *Quote: "You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you."*
- **Breaking the Covenant:** Failure to circumcise is viewed as a breach of the covenant, with serious consequences including being "cut off" from the people. This is illustrated by the example of Moses in Exodus 4.
- *Quote: "And the uncircumcised male child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."*
- **Significance:** Circumcision symbolizes the need for internal cleansing, pointing to the concept of "circumcision of the heart." This theme is developed in Deuteronomy and later picked up in the New Testament, showing that outward rituals must reflect inner transformation.
- *Quote: "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."*

1. **Genesis 22: Akedah (The Binding of Isaac)**

- **Test of Faith:** God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is presented as a severe test of faith and obedience.
- **Reaffirmation of the Covenant:** In response to his obedience, God reconfirms the central elements of the Abrahamic Covenant, stating that "in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This is enclosed by the statement "because you have done this thing" which raises difficult theological questions of the relationship between obedience and the covenant promises.
- *Quote: "Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son. That in blessing I will bless you... and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice."*

- **Theological Question:** The lecture grapples with the "because" in this reiteration, questioning if Abraham's obedience is a meritorious condition for the promise. It concludes that Abraham's faith and obedience are a divinely ordained *means* of administering the promise, not an efficient cause or meritorious reward. God's grace is primary in this, but that does not preclude the importance of Abraham's faith and actions.
- *Quote: "God does not do that in the sense of efficient cause or meritorious reward, but in the sense of the divinely ordained means of administration of the promise."*
- **Calvin's Perspective:** Calvin is quoted stating, "God pays nothing as a debt, but gives to his own benefits the title of a reward." This suggests that while Abraham's actions are presented as a response, they are enabled by God's grace and therefore not a cause or ground of the promise but, rather an integral part of it.
- **Abraham's Faith:** The lecture highlights Hebrews 11, stating that Abraham's obedience was an act of faith. He believed God could raise Isaac from the dead.

1. Relationship Between Old and New Covenants

- **Unity of Covenant:** The lecture emphasizes the overarching unity of the covenant of grace across the Old and New Testaments. While the administration of the covenant differs, its fundamental nature remains perpetual.
- **Circumcision and Baptism:** Baptism is presented as the New Testament counterpart to circumcision, both being signs of the covenant.
- **Distinctions Remain:** Though distinctions between Jew and Gentile are erased in Christ, the lecture asserts there is still a distinction between those who are the physical seed of Abraham and those who are not. This distinction remains in the "physical seed," but all believers are one in the "spiritual seed."
- *Quote: "Even though Jew and Gentile are one in Christ, there can be still that distinction between those who are the seed of Abraham by the flesh, and those who are not, who are spiritual seed."*
- **Divine Sovereignty and Human ResponsibilityMystery:** The lecture acknowledges the difficulty in fully understanding the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

- **No Contradiction:** While not fully explainable, the lecture asserts there is no fundamental contradiction between these two concepts.
- **Stepping Back:** At some points, the lecture suggests that it is important to "step back" and allow scripture to speak for itself without trying to dissect every detail.
- *Quote: "It seems to me that there are points you can't fully understand or explain. When you try to do that, you usually fall into distorting one side over the other side."*

Implications:

- The Abrahamic Covenant is a foundational element for understanding God's redemptive plan in the Old Testament.
- The covenant includes promises of land and descendants and requires obedience as a response to God's grace.
- Circumcision is a physical sign pointing to the need for internal spiritual transformation.
- The tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility remains a complex and not entirely comprehensible area of faith.
- Abraham's story, especially in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, is a model of faith and obedience in response to God's call.

This briefing doc summarizes the key themes from the provided source. It highlights the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant and the interplay of faith, obedience, and God's grace within that covenant framework.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 23, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen. 15, 17, and Akedah (Gen. 22)

Abrahamic Covenant Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is significant about the smoking furnace and flaming torch in Genesis 15?
2. What are the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land as initially given to Abraham?
3. How did the reigns of David and Solomon relate to the fulfillment of the promise of land to Abraham?
4. According to Jeremiah, what is as sure as the rising and setting of the sun?
5. What is the relationship between circumcision and baptism in covenant theology?
6. What is the meaning of the name change from Abram to Abraham, and why is it important?
7. What does Genesis 22 reveal about Abraham's faith?
8. What does the phrase "cut off from his people" mean in relation to the Abrahamic Covenant?
9. Why was circumcision practiced among other nations, and what did it signify in relation to God's covenant with Abraham?
10. What is the significance of "circumcision of the heart"?

Answer Key

1. The smoking furnace and flaming torch represent God passing between the animal parts in a ratification rite. This theophany symbolizes God's self-malediction, undergoing the covenant's curse, and foreshadows the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
2. The Promised Land was described as extending from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River. This expansive boundary was reiterated to Moses and Joshua, with some areas partially realized in their time.

3. David placed garrisons as far as the Euphrates River, and Solomon ruled from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt. This was considered a provisional fulfillment of the land promise made to Abraham.
4. According to Jeremiah, the existence of Israel as a nation is as certain as the sun, moon, and stars. God's covenant with Israel is linked to the creation ordinances, implying the nation will endure.
5. In covenant theology, baptism is seen as a New Testament counterpart to circumcision, with baptism now the sign and seal of the covenant. While the physical distinctions within the covenant people are less important, there remains an important distinction between physical and spiritual seeds of Abraham.
6. Abram's name means "the father is exalted," referencing God; Abraham means "father of many nations," referencing his numerous offspring. This name change signifies a key element of the Abrahamic Covenant, his role as the progenitor of a multitude.
7. Genesis 22 shows that Abraham's faith was tested when God commanded him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham's willingness to obey demonstrated a profound trust in God's faithfulness, despite the apparent contradiction with earlier promises.
8. The phrase "cut off from his people" signifies exclusion from the covenant community for the uncircumcised male. This punishment could include death, either by God or the community, or excommunication.
9. While other nations practiced circumcision, God gave it to Abraham as a sign of the covenant relationship with Him, not as an origin of the rite. This covenant sign was not primarily about ritual, but about God's unique relationship with Abraham and his offspring.
10. "Circumcision of the heart" refers to the internal cleansing of sin, which is more significant than physical circumcision. This concept emphasizes the need for a transformed heart and a true relationship with God beyond mere outward adherence to rituals.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Write an essay in response to each of the following questions.

1. Discuss the progression of the Abrahamic Covenant across Genesis 12, 15, 17, and 22, focusing on its key elements, reaffirmations, and the challenges Abraham faces.
2. Analyze the significance of the geographical borders of the Promised Land in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant. How do these borders relate to God's larger purposes, and how does the fulfillment unfold in the Old Testament?
3. Explore the connection between the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant, including the relationship between circumcision and baptism. How do these two covenants relate to each other in the administration of God's grace?
4. Examine the role of faith and obedience in Abraham's life, particularly in Genesis 22. What are the theological implications of Abraham's actions, and how do they relate to the nature of God's promises?
5. Assess the concept of "circumcision of the heart" in the Old Testament. How does this concept challenge the notion of physical circumcision as the sole requirement for being a part of God's people, and what does it reveal about God's redemptive purposes?

Glossary of Key Terms

Akedah: The Hebrew term for the "binding" of Isaac, referring to the story in Genesis 22 where God commands Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice.

Abrahamic Covenant: The covenant between God and Abraham, involving promises of land, descendants, and blessing to all nations (Gen 12:1-3, 15, 17, 22). It is the foundation for the relationship between God and his people in the Old Testament.

Circumcision: The physical removal of the foreskin of male children; in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant, it serves as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

Circumcision of the Heart: The symbolic process of internal cleansing of sin, signifying a heart devoted to God and a true, inward relationship with Him.

Covenant Theology: A theological system that interprets the relationship between God and humanity through the lens of covenants, with the Abrahamic Covenant as a foundational element.

Euphrates River: A major river in the ancient Near East, marking one of the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land given to Abraham.

Theophany: A visible manifestation of God to humankind; in Genesis 15, the smoking furnace and flaming torch symbolize God's presence.

Seed: A term used to describe the offspring or descendants of Abraham. This term can refer to both physical descendants and a spiritual lineage of believers in God.

Sign of the Covenant: An outward symbol or ritual act that represents and validates the covenantal relationship between God and his people; circumcision serves as such a sign in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Unleavened Bread: Bread made without yeast, associated with the Passover Feast and the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover are associated with the covenant in the text provided.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Genesis, Session 23, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen. 15, 17, and Akedah (Gen. 22), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Abrahamic Covenant

- **What is the significance of the smoking furnace and flaming torch in Genesis 15, and how does it relate to the Abrahamic covenant?**
- The smoking furnace and flaming torch, passing between the divided animal pieces in Genesis 15, symbolize God's self-malediction. It represents God taking upon himself the covenant's curse of being "cut asunder" to ensure the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. This prefigures the sacrifice of Christ. It is not just a display of divine power, but also a deep commitment to the covenant with Abraham. This act of self-malediction highlights God's seriousness about fulfilling his covenantal obligations, even if it means experiencing the covenant's curse Himself.
- **What are the geographical boundaries of the land promised to Abraham, and were they ever fully realized in the Old Testament?** The land promised to Abraham was defined as stretching from the "river of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates." This included the land of the Canaanites, Lebanon, and areas along the Mediterranean Sea. While Israel gained control of much of this territory during the conquest under Joshua and further under the reigns of David and Solomon, it's presented as a "provisional fulfillment." David's military campaigns and Solomon's reign extended the borders to the Euphrates, fulfilling the promise at that time. However, the promises of God are not limited to literal interpretations of this geographical space.
- **How is the Abrahamic covenant described as "everlasting," and what does it mean for the nation of Israel?** The Abrahamic covenant is described as everlasting because it is tied to the creation ordinances, specifically the cycle of day and night (Jeremiah 31:35-36). As long as the sun and moon continue to shine, the seed of Israel will continue to exist as a nation before the Lord. This suggests that God's promise to Abraham and his descendants is not only continuous but also unchanging and unconditional, linked to the very structure of creation. The promise of the land is coextensive with the Abrahamic covenant.

- How do circumcision and baptism relate to the Abrahamic and New Covenants?**
 Circumcision is a sign of the Abrahamic covenant, signifying inclusion in God's covenant community. Baptism in the New Testament is seen as a counterpart to circumcision. Both rituals are signs of entry into the covenant community, but the New Testament moves beyond a physical or nationalistic focus to one centered on faith in Christ. While distinctions between Jew and Gentile remain, the emphasis is on the spiritual seed of Abraham, where all are one in Christ. In the New Covenant the physical sign is replaced by a sign of spiritual reality.
- How was Abraham's name change from Abram to Abraham significant in relation to God's promise?**
 The change from Abram ("God is exalted") to Abraham ("father of many") reflects the expansion of God's promise. It symbolizes that Abraham was not just going to be the father of one nation, but of many, emphasizing the numerous offspring God promised him. This name change also underscores the shift in the understanding of Abraham's role in God's covenant. His role was not just to be a patriarch but the progenitor of many nations through his seed.
- What is the significance of the binding of Isaac (Akedah) in Genesis 22, and how does it relate to Abraham's faith?**
 The binding of Isaac in Genesis 22, also known as the Akedah, was a severe test of Abraham's faith. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only son, through whom the promise of descendants was to be fulfilled. Abraham's willingness to obey, even when the command conflicted with God's previous promises, demonstrated his unwavering faith in God's faithfulness and power. It also represents God's own willingness to sacrifice his only son, Jesus Christ. Abraham believed that if God asked him to sacrifice his son, God could raise him from the dead.
- How does the text explain the connection between Abraham's obedience and God's promise in Genesis 22:17-18?**
- The "because" in Genesis 22:17-18 ("because you have done this thing... and because you have obeyed my voice") is interpreted not as Abraham earning God's promises but as his obedience being part of the divinely ordained means of administering the promise. God worked obedience in Abraham's life through grace, and that obedience did not merit the reward but was essential to how God's promises were promulgated. In this view, Abraham's faithfulness was the fruit of God's grace working within him, not the cause of it.

- **What is the significance of circumcision as a sign of the covenant, and how does it relate to "circumcision of the heart"?** Circumcision served as a physical sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants, signifying their separation and commitment to God. However, its deeper meaning is an inward cleansing, a removal of uncleanness, and pointing to the need for an internal cleansing. "Circumcision of the heart" signifies a spiritual transformation, a turning of one's affections to the Lord and a cleansing from sin. The outward act was intended to reflect the inward reality that God required of his people: a true heart of devotion. Thus, physical descent from Abraham was not sufficient for someone to be a true child of God.