

The Lord Saw Abraham Make a Covenant

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God has a great concern for the fatherless and wants to help them in their growth to maturity. In this topic, we will see that Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech, the king of Gerar.

In Genesis 21:22-24, we read, “And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, ‘God *is* with you in all that you do. Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.’ And Abraham said, ‘I will swear.’” In chapter 20, we saw that Abimelech rebuked Abraham for saying that Sarah was his sister, instead of saying that she was his wife. Then, he chose to show Abraham kindness. Now, we see that Abimelech had realized that the Lord had greatly blessed Abraham, and Abimelech wanted to make a covenant to show this kindness with Abraham. Abimelech and the commander of his army, Phichol, had been observing the way that the Lord was blessing Abraham and everything that he had.

One day, Abimelech and Phichol came and said to Abraham, “God is with you in all that you do.” One of the things that we notice here is that others are watching what we do. They will notice the way that the Lord is working in our lives when we put our trust in Him. This blessing of the Lord caused Abimelech and Phichol to want to make a covenant of kindness with Abraham. Then, they made their request to Abraham, “Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.” The phrase “you will not deal falsely” means *to trick, to cheat, or to break a promise*.

Abimelech had shown kindness to Abraham when Abraham deceived him about his wife. That had an impact on the entire kingdom of Abimelech. However, he had chosen to show kindness to Abraham instead of evil. As a result, since Abimelech had now seen the way that the Lord blessed Abraham, he wanted Abraham to make a covenant to return that kindness with kindness. He asked that this covenant would be a covenant with his own children and with all of his future descendants. Abraham realized that this covenant would also affect his children and all of his future descendants. Abraham said he would be willing to swear to make such a covenant with Abimelech and the families and people of his nation.

As a result, Abraham decided that this was the time to speak to Abimelech about something that had happened between their servants. Genesis 21:25-29 says, “Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech’s servants had seized. And Abimelech said, ‘I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard *of it* until today.’ So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. Then Abimelech asked Abraham, ‘What *is the meaning of* these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?’” These verses show us that the first thing Abraham did was rebuke Abimelech because the servants of Abimelech had seized a well that had been dug by the servants of Abraham.

The word translated “rebuked” is the same word that was used when Abimelech rebuked Sarah

for saying she was the sister of Abraham and not telling him that she was the wife. Genesis 20:16 says, “Then to Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand *pieces* of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who *are* with you and before everybody.’ Thus she was rebuked.” The word translated “rebuked” is the same in both passages and means *to rebuke, correct, or convince and also includes the thought that it is also a call for repentance*. Abimelech had shown kindness when Abraham confessed and told the truth. Abimelech confessed by saying he did not know that this had happened until the very day when Abraham told him about the well.

Abraham showed that he believed the words that Abimelech did not know earlier about the well. First, Abraham did exactly what Abimelech had done when Abraham confessed his sin at the earlier time. Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech as the two of them made the covenant. Sheep and oxen were the same animals that Abimelech had given to Abraham in Genesis 20:14. Those gifts showed that Abimelech had accepted the response of Abraham and Sarah to his rebuke. Abraham showed that he had accepted the confession of Abimelech that he had just found out about the well that day. Then, Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant that they would show kindness to each other and their descendants in the future years.

Abraham then did something that was not understood by Abimelech. Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. As a result, Abimelech asked Abraham to explain the purpose of the seven ewe lambs that were by themselves. Genesis 21:30-34 says, “And he said, ‘You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.’ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. Then *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.” In these verses, we see that Abraham answered the question.

A ewe lamb is a female lamb. Abraham said that Abimelech was to take these seven female lambs as a witness to the fact that Abraham and his servants had dug this well. Abraham realized that the best way to avoid conflict between his servants and the servants of Abimelech was to have Abimelech take these seven ewe lambs as a public testimony that the servants of Abraham had dug this well. Then, there would be no conflict in the future. Much later, in the New Testament, Christ chose the twelve apostles to be witnesses of his resurrection so it was not just the word of one or two people. When they chose a replacement for Judas in Acts 1:21-22, they said, “‘Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.’” To make certain that there were many witnesses to verify the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:6 adds, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” Here, Abraham wanted many witnesses to see these seven lambs.

The place where Abraham and Abimelech made this covenant was then given the name of “Beersheba,” which means *well of the seven* or *well of the oath*. The fact that this name is used thirty-four times in the Old Testament provides a continuing remembrance of the fact that this oath between Abraham and Abimelech was made over four thousand years ago. This city became known as the southern border of Israel during much of the Old Testament. 2 Samuel 3:9-10 says, “‘May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the Lord has sworn to him—to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over

Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.”” In these verses, we see that this is the way Israel was described at the time David became the king of the entire nation of Israel. Second, we see that Abraham did one other thing at Beersheba. He planted a tree there and called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. The word translated “everlasting” can point to the distant past when referring to people. Isaiah 63:9 says, ““In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old.”” We see that the word is used to extend into the past at least to the time of the Exodus. It also points forward to the eternal future of the Word of God in many places. Verses like Psalm 119:89 and 119:160 point to the far distant future. Psalm 119:89 says, “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.” Then, Psalm 119:160 says, “The entirety of Your word *is* truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.” Christ shared the same thought in Matthew 24:35, where He said, ““Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.””

However, when the word is used to refer to God, it speaks of the fact that God and His acts are eternal. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.” In Genesis 21:33, we see that Abraham understood that the Lord is the Everlasting God. This same thought is given in Isaiah 9:6-7, which is a prophecy about the birth of Christ. Those verses say, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are eternal. Verses like Genesis 1:26, Exodus 3:14, Isaiah 11:1-2, and many others also help to explain this fact. Here, we see that Abraham understood the fact that God is eternal. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain that God is the Everlasting God.