

Bible Study—Jesus: The New Abraham

Now, our task this year is to answer this question: Who is Jesus? We've already seen that Jesus is a New Adam—He's God's Son who always finds his belonging and identity in God, the Father. He is an obedient Son, as opposed to Adam who disobeyed and who consequently forgot his identity and to whom he belonged (i.e., God).

We've also seen that Jesus is a New Noah. Noah was blameless and, out of obedience, built an ark in which he and his family (and two of every creature) were saved from the flood that washed away the wickedness on the face of the earth. Well, Jesus establishes a new, sacramental flood called Baptism that washes away our original sin (and any personal sin we might have committed), adopts us as God's sons and daughters (repairing the relationship originally broken by Adam), and incorporates us into a new family, the Church. The Church is like a new ark—not made out of gopherwood, but the wood of the Cross—carrying us through the storms of this life to our heavenly homeland.

So, how does Abraham help us to understand something about who Jesus is? To answer this, let's look more closely at God's first words to Abram. Please **read Genesis 12:1-3**.

What does God ask Abram to do? *Go forth from the land of your _____ and from your father's _____ to a _____ that I will show you.*

If Abram does it, what does God promise Abram? (Hint: He makes 3 specific promises, and we've talked about all of them before.)

I will make of you a great _____, and I will bless you; I will make your _____ great, so that you will be a blessing. . . All the _____ of the earth shall find blessing in you.

Later in the story of Abram, God is going to “upgrade” each of these promises to the level of a covenant. The difference between a promise and a covenant is sort of like the difference between an engagement ring and a wedding ring. One symbolizes a strong hope and a firm intention to marry, and the other symbolizes an unbreakable commitment.

For the fun of it, draw an engagement ring and a wedding ring:

Now, let's try to connect some dots between Abram and Jesus by looking at St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians 2:5-11. Go ahead...read it!

Remember, Abram was to leave his father's house to go to the land God would show him. Well, in Philippians, Jesus, God's Son, “leaves” his Father's house (heaven!) and takes on human flesh. Amazing!

Abram obeyed God. Jesus, the Son, obeys the Father, too (see Phil. 2:8). Obedience is a key feature of what it means to live as a son or daughter. **What is obedience and why is it important?**

So, we have the first point: Abram is obedient and faithful, and Jesus is obedient and faithful. Guess what?! We should be too!

Jesus humbles himself, taking on the form of a slave—one who is bound to the will of another. Jesus, the Son, is obedient to the Father, binding himself to the Father's will. He is at the service of the Father. **Do you know which nation Jesus was first sent by the Father to serve? Read Matthew 15:24.** *Hint: This is that original nation, that original group of people, promised to Abraham (i.e., Promise #1 above) and which comes to fruition in Moses and the people he led out of Egypt.*

Here's the second point: From Abraham's offspring, God established the nation of Israel. Jesus comes to serve the nation of Israel first, and through Israel (or the new Israel—the Church), he'll bless everyone.

Next, God promised Abraham that he would make of him a great name. A "great name" refers to a dynasty—a line of kings—and an empire—ruling over many nations. Israel did become a political dynasty under King David and ruled over many nations, though Israel was really a rather humble little nation of people.

Now, look back at **Philippians 2:8-9**. Why does God *greatly* exalt Jesus? (Hint: If you need some help, you can also check out **Matthew 23:12**.)

In God's logic, then, greatness doesn't have to do with huge shows of political power, military might, or abundant wealth, but with:

Why? What is humility and why is it so great?

What is *the* great name? (See **Philippians 2:10) The name of _____.**

Do you know what Jesus' name means? (Check out paragraph 72 in the *Youcat* on your table.)

Alright, so we have, here, the third point: Abraham's "great name" initially appeared in the form of David/the Davidic kingdom—a political and military powerhouse. But, the truly "great name" appears in Jesus. His name is great because of his humility.

Finally, the fourth point. Through Abraham's descendants, all of the nations of the earth (literally everyone who has ever lived), will be blessed. That word "to bless," means *to be made holy, to be consecrated (set apart for a special purpose), or to be made happy*.

Jesus, the son of Abraham (see Mt. 1:1), is *the* descendant of Abraham who finally makes this possible. **Read Galatians 3:14**. The blessing is being extended from the people of Israel, the Jewish people, to the whole world (i.e., Gentiles=non-Jews). Jesus is the holy one of God (Mk. 1:24), anointed by God (e.g., Lk. 3:22), indeed, God himself, who blesses us. Jesus *is* God's blessing to humanity. Jesus makes true happiness—relationship or friendship with God—possible. But how does Jesus' blessing reach all the families or all the nations of the earth?

Though the human family was scattered at the Tower of Babel, every person on the face of the earth can be blessed and brought back into one family through Jesus and his disciples. Check it out; **read Mark 16:15-17**. God's blessing reaches every nation through the Church and the Church is that one, big, universal family (Catholic, in fact, means "universal").

So, each of Jesus' disciples, each member of the Church, is to be blessed by Christ (made happy or joyful in him and set apart for a unique purpose) and to bless others in Christ. This really means being charitable. That word charity has to do with God's love—the way God loves. We bless others when we start to see them as God sees them and love them with the love God has for them—for God's sake. We're really participating in God's big mission of letting people know how much he loves them. **How do you reflect God's love for each other in your home? Any ways in which you could reflect that love more clearly? How about outside of the home? How do you reflect the love of God in your schools, in various social settings, etc.?**