

Genesis 18:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Analysis

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep t... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וְיֶדְעָתָה יְהִי כִּי	לְמַעַן	אֲשֶׁר	יִצְרָא ה	אֶת	בְּנֵי	אֶת
H3588 For I know	H4616 him that	H834 he will command	H6680	H853 his children	H1121	H853
H3045	H834		H1870			
בַּיִתְּנוּ	אַחֲרָיו	וְשִׁמְרָה	לְרַהֲבָה	יְהִי	לְעַשׂ	וְתַ
and his household	after him	and they shall keep	the way	of the LORD	to do	
H1004	H310	H8104	H1870	H3068	H6213	
אַבְרָהָם עַל	קָבֵד יְהִי	בְּנֵי	וְמִשְׁפָּט עַל	אַבְרָהָם		
justice and judgment		may bring	of the LORD	H5921 upon Abraham		
H6666	H4941	H4616	H935	H3068	H85	
אֲשֶׁר אֵת	דְּבָרָה	עַלְיוֹן				
him that	that which he hath spoken	H5921				
H853	H834	H1696				

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 3:15 (Parallel theme): And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 6:4 (Judgment): And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Proverbs 22:6 (Parallel theme): Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (References Lord): And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

1 Timothy 3:12 (Parallel theme): Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Deuteronomy 32:46 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

Joshua 24:15 (References Lord): And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Psalms 34:15 (Righteousness): The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

Psalms 11:4 (References Lord): The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

Job 1:5 (Parallel theme): And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.