

GENESIS 15:1-6, 17-21

LESSON: GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM — October 1, 2017

LESSON:

I. PREDICAMENT Genesis 15:1-3

15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. The previous chapter focused on Abram's actions, but this chapter deals with his emotions. "After these things..." What things? - After the battle and all other things that had occurred. *The word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision...* This presents one of the six ways which God spoke to individuals in Old Testament times (Num.12:6-8).

1. He spoke through angels (Gen.16).
2. He spoke in visions (Amos 7:1; Gen.15).
3. He spoke in dreams (Gen.41:1; Dan.2:1; 3).
4. He revealed Himself by speaking directly to the Prophets mouth to mouth (Dan.12:8).
5. He spoke in a gentle whisper (I Kgs.19:12).
6. He spoke in miraculous signs (Exo.8:20-25).

God called him by name. He knew Abram's heart, his fears, and disappointments. The tenderness of this act really brought Abram prostrate before God and encouraged him beyond all measure. When God called Abram's name, Abram knew above all else that he truly belonged to God. In this vision; in this mental picture, God gave a threefold message:

1. **"Abram do not fear."** It seems that along the way fear came into the picture. Why? He had just come out of a war and perhaps he feared the revenge of the kings he had just defeated or the fear of being childless.
2. **"Abram I am your shield."** God wanted to reassure him that He is his shield, a protector and defender. God shielded Abram...
 - a. from being hopelessly discouraged and giving up.
 - b. from denying the faith and the promises of God.
 - c. from being defeated by the enemies of life.
 - d. from losing his soul to the spiritual enemies of God.
 - e. from losing heart in the face of weakness, temptation, and trial.
3. **"Abram I am your exceeding great reward."** God would continue to fight for him as He had just demonstrated in chapter 14. And He would continue to reward Abram, especially since Abram had returned all the goods; valuables and gold, livestock and possessions, to all the people he had rescued. All the wealth was rightfully his by the law of conquest, but he had returned all and kept nothing for himself. God had truly made a Covenant with Abram, and Abram needed not fear because "I Am" had spoken. Abram was to be rewarded by God Himself, His very nature, beyond and above anything Abram could ever guess.

Just like Abram's experience, emotions can fall apart; darkness can sweep over our souls; trials can sap our strength; temptation can cause us to question and doubt God's promises. In fact, times do arise when we need a fresh experience with God, a brokenness experience, a deep sense of His presence, a special reassurance from His Word. It is in such moments of need that God always comes to us to meet our need, and the depth of the experience with God, always matches our need. The experience of His presence and the

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

power of His Word and assurance, are always just what we need. This was the case with Abram, and it is always the case with the genuine follower of God

15:2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? Now we see, something else that Abram feared: having no child. He was too old; too many years had passed since the promise had been given. ¹The last time God had spoken to Abram about the birth of a son, he had promised him he would make his descendants like the dust of the earth (Gen.13:16). His nephew Lot whom he had reared and loved like a son had chosen to follow after the world instead of God (Gen.13:14). Therefore, he was unfit to be the heir, so the question to the Lord was, "*what will you give me?*" Abram comes up with the idea of the steward, Eliezer of Damascus, his most trusted servant in his household to inherit his wealth. This was a Mesopotamian custom—if Abram died without a son of his own, then his eldest servant would become his heir.

15:3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. Abram is wondering what happened to the promise. He's saying Look now; I still don't have a seed. He was disappointed and getting impatient! The male carries the seed for the baby, and as of yet, Abram's seed or heir had not been born. However, Abram is now considering his servant Eliezer of Damascus in the house; he could be his heir. How much longer would he wait?

II. PROPHECY Genesis 15:4-6

15:4 And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. There is a regular dialog going on between Abram and God. After God hears him, God said no, Eliezer will not be his heir. God then told Abram that he and Sarai will have a son who will come from their own bodies; his own flesh and blood; from their own bowels— this is where their heir will come from. The promised seed was sure to come.

15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Remember, God was giving Abram a vision of all this. God took Abram outside, which means that Abram was inside his tent. Now He tells Abram to look up and if he is able to count the stars, so will his seed (descendants) be. What a glorious encouragement! Everytime Abram looked up at the stars he would think of the great promise of God and be encouraged and strengthened in his faith. ²No one knows how many stars there are. That's precisely God's point. Abraham will have so many descendants that he will never be able to count them all.

15:6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. To "*believe*" means to rest upon, to lean upon, to be sure of, to have complete and full confidence in. There are essentially two types of righteousness: righteousness we think we accomplish by our own efforts, and righteousness accounted to us by the work of

¹ <http://www.raystedman.org/old-testament/genesis/faith-conquering-fear>

² <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1996-04-28-How-to-Overcome-Fear/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

Christ when we believe. God took Abram's faith and counted or credited it to him for righteousness. No person is righteous before God. Our righteousness is always seen in Christ Jesus. Those who believe are in Christ! The key word is "in." Our faith is in the Person of... our belief is in the Person of... When a person deposits his money in a bank, the bank credits the money to his account. When Abram deposited his faith in God; laid his life into the hands of God; God credited his faith as righteousness because Abram deposited his faith in God. What did Abram believe? He believed God's promise to give the promised seed. *That's why it said, "And he believed in the Lord..."*

III. PROMISE Genesis 15:17-21

15:17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. God gave Abram a deep experience of His holy presence. But note how God appeared to Abram: God's presence was symbolized in a smoking firepot with a blazing torch. God often symbolized His presence by using fire. God appeared to Moses in the "*Burning Bush!*" The Bible says that God is a consuming fire. There had to be shed blood to seal the covenant. To confirm His promise:—the smoking firepot and flaming torch passing between the parts of the sacrificed animals. Ancient covenants were sometimes confirmed by the halving of sacrificial animals and the passing between them of the two parties of the covenant (Jere.34:18). However, there was only one to pass through the carcasses and that Person was God. This indicated that Yahweh alone was undertaking the fulfillment of all the conditions attached to the covenant. The sign to Abram was a visible assurance to him that the covenant God had made was real. Therefore, if the covenant of the Promised Seed and the Promised Land was to ever be established and fulfilled, it had to be established by God and by God alone; by grace and by grace alone. A person is saved—receives the Promised Seed (Christ) and the Promised Land (heaven)—by grace and grace alone.

15:18 In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:— This is an expansion of the covenant given earlier by God: here the actual boundaries of the Promised Land are given. The Promised Land will stretch from somewhere close to the great Nile River to the great Euphrates River. Note, at that time, there were apparently ten significant tribes of Canaanite people occupying the land. The Amorites were the largest, and the name Amorite was sometimes used to refer to all the Canaanite people.

15:19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,—

- The **Kenite** dwelt in the country bordering on Egypt, and south of Palestine, in which the Amalekites also are found. They were friendly toward the Israelites, and hence some of them followed their fortunes and settled in their land.
- The **Kenizzites** dwelt apparently in the same region, having affinity with the Horites, and subsequently with Edom and Israel.
- The **Kadmonite** seems to be the Eastern, and, therefore, to hold the other extreme boundary of the Promised Land, toward Tadmor and the Phrat. These three tribes were probably related to Abram, and, therefore, descendants of Shem.

15:20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,—

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- The **Hittites** were descendants of Ham through Heth who was the second son of Canaan.
- The **Perizzites** were a tribe that opposed Israel and was driven out of Canaan.
- The **Rephaims** were a strong people living in Palestine before Abraham. They are one of the groups of peoples who had been defeated by Chedorlaomer. They seemed to live in a rather large area, just east of the Salt Sea.

15:21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

- The **Amorites** were mountain dwellers; one of the Canaanite tribes often fighting Israel.
- The **Canaanites** were a Semitic tribe that lived in Canaan before the Israelites conquered it. They were descendants of Ham, the son of Noah.
- The **Girgashites** were an original tribe of Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah. The name means "*dwelling on clay soil*".
- The **Jebusites** were a tribe of Canaanite people who lived in and around Jerusalem.

Ten nations are listed here, nations which occupied the land of Canaan. Ten is the number that signifies the perfection of Divine order, completeness, nothing lacking which indicates that the entirety of this land which would also include other tribes would be given to Abraham's descendants.

SUMMARY:

Abram ³was struggling with the delay in God's promises being fulfilled. God began to encourage him to not fear because He would be his shield and exceeding great reward. Abram's concern about dying without an heir led him to think that his servant Eliezer would be his heir (**15:1-3**).

The Lord readily answers to clarify it by declaring "*this man shall not be your heir*", meaning his servant. God does not even consider him as an option, but says his son shall come forth out of his own bowels. At this point, still looking at it in the vision, God takes Abram to the outside of the tent to look up at the stars; if he's able to count them, so shall his seed be. Of course, he could not count all the stars. But, he believed in the Lord, and God credited this belief; his faith was account as righteousness. In other words, Abram wasn't righteous in and of himself; however, because he had faith in the Word of the Lord, the Lord's righteousness was credited to him (**15:4-6**).

In this vision, Abram also sees a smoking firepot proclaiming the furnace of affliction that Israel will have to pass through; and a flaming torch move between the split carcasses of animals sacrificed. This represented the manifestation of God's divine presence passing through the sacrifice showing that He was and would be the light and salvation of His people. In Exodus He was their pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. The purpose was to settle the matter of His covenant He had made with Abram: The promised seed was reaffirmed and the Promised Land was reaffirmed. God reveals to Abram the boundaries of the Promised Land, from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River (**15:17-21**).

³ <http://mark12ministries.wordpress.com/2009/11/15/genesis-15-1-6-%E2%80%9Cgods-promises-are-abundant/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>