

What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM:

“God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

Study Number Three – Genesis 15:1-21

We left our hero at the OAKS OF MAMRE, which is a place of fellowship. In our last study was the long journey back and then out of the will of God in the land of Egypt. Having been deported by Pharaoh and the government officials, he and Lot and Sarah and all their belongings made that 250-mile trip back.

We learned that when we miss the will of God we go back to where we got out and then we can go back to the will of God at that point. And realize that when we're out of the will of God, we're making no progress and we have to go back and take the lessons that we should have been learning all along. And that was kind of the story we learned in that passage.

He ends up at the Oaks of Mamre, back in the land, and he builds an altar for the Lord.

Now some things have happened. Lot has been separated from Abram because of the conflict. And now he is down in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, living specifically in the city of Sodom. And we're going to see him in the story here in just a minute.

One of the most significant parts in our study is chapter 15, rather than chapter 14. But we can do a quick summary of chapter 14 to get everyone up to speed.

After the experience of the separation, there was political upheaval in the whole area. And there were five kings who banded together to fight four foreign kings who were coming in against them.

Among those five kings were the kings of Sodom and of Gomorrah. These five guys lost the battle to the four kings that they invaded. The text of scripture in chapter 14 keeps us focused on Lot for just a little bit. We read:

Genesis 14:12

They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

Now when he moved there he went there for pastureland. And he was living in his tent outside of the city. While there, they build a home in Sodom and he becomes politically involved on the city council.

Watch it when making decisions that we're going to change an environment even though it's not what we would like. More than not, we will find that the environment will change us.

That is a painful lesson so many couples who have married

unsaved individuals have to learn. After experiences of divorce, they realize they're suffering the consequences of the violation of a scriptural principle of being unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Sodom is the city of sin. It's the city of great wickedness in the eyes of God. And it is destined for judgment, as we all know, when fire and brimstone fall on those two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

So here he is, on a downhill slide, cooperating fully with the process of compromise. In the process he is also captured and all of his possessions.

Then we read:

Genesis 14:15

During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.

Abram heard about it. He had 314 servants. And it's kind of like the story of Gideon and the battle with the Mideonites, when the Lord said, "300 guys against 120,000 is a piece of cake as long as I'm with the 300."

Well obviously, this is what happened for Abram against these four kings—victoriously leaving with all these things, including Lot and all of his possessions. He surprises them at

night and he wins the victory against them.

So as the scene of our study opens, we read in verse 16:

Genesis 14:16

He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

So it's been a great victory. What the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah said was, "Abram we really appreciate what you've done. We want to give you some gifts."

And Abram looked at them and he said, "I am not taking a shoestring from any one of you lest you think that I'm the one responsible for the victory." So he turned them down in that regard.

We need to understand that because of what God is getting ready to say to him here in chapter 15. God will be a debtor to no man. When we are faithful and prodded to do things like this, God will honor that and He will bless us abundantly beyond anything we could have thought or imagined in the process.

And so as the scene of the study opens, we have our hero, who's 85 years old, weary in well-doing. He's been traveling and carrying on and in conflict.

God speaks six times in chapter 15. Each time He speaks has to do with a different subject. Let's briefly look at the six times He speaks and then we'll come back and look at those later.

In verse 1 as the study opens, here he is, our exhausted servant who has won the victory.

1. What is the Lord's personal PROVISION for him?—verse 1.

The Lord has something very special in mind for him.

2. He's going to talk to him about the SEED—verses 4 and 5.

Remember the two things in the Abrahamic Covenant were the seed and also the land. And we're going to see more of that in the study. So the next thing is the seed—the children that he's going to have as a result of God's covenant and promise.

3. He's going to talk about the LAND—verse 7.

He has some good things to say.

4. We're going to see the institution of the unconditional COVENANT—verse 9.

This is going to be loaded with truth.

5. & 6. The last two times he speaks in verses 13-16 and

verses 18-21 it's going to be about the LAND.

He's going to come back and speak again about the land. So that's the way we're going to look at the continuation of our hero Abram in chapter 15.

Here we go. Ready?

v. 1 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

“After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’”

“After this” refers to what? It refers to what has just happened in the conflict in the successful campaign and in coming home.

“After this,”—when he got back home again—“the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:”

Now notice **THREE THINGS** He has to say to him. The reason that the Lord comes right now and speaks to him is there's a principle of scripture also that we need to understand:

After every moment of great action, where we have great victory, there will be a moment of reaction or a great sense of defeat or depression.

We see that most graphically in Elijah. On Mount Carmel he wins a fabulous battle against the priests of Baal—fires come down from heaven—but as soon as he gets back to Jezreel, Jezebel sends him a note. She says, “I’m coming and you’re going to be like my prophets tomorrow. I’m killing you.”

Well, he flees to Beersheba, goes out into the wilderness, tells God he’s through.

Why would Abraham be vulnerable? In the same way Joseph was vulnerable. He was in prison thinking that liberation was close but that wasn’t God’s plan.

Ten years—he left Ur of Chaldees to trust God. Ten years—had the promise of God at 75, still had a barren wife and no child on the horizon. “And here I am in the land inhabited by the Canaanites and I’ve had to leave to go find food in Egypt.”

He is vulnerable to deep, deep discouragement. God knows that. When we’re sensitive to the word and we’re sensitive to the Lord, He will come along in those deep valleys and He will bring healing, He’ll bring comfort, He’ll bring encouragement.

And so after the high he could be there. But look at the three wonderful things that the Lord has provided for him—and He’s done the same for us.

We’ll find that when God speaks His message, it’s always intimately related to the need of the person He’s speaking to.

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So everything He says in this passage is loaded with ramifications forged out of the furnace for our hero Abram.

Every new beginning will lead to higher ground.

In our last passage, what happened?

He obeyed—he separated from Lot. He obeyed—he came home. He obeyed—he built an altar and he called on the name of the Lord. All of those things.

When we get our life in line with the Lord and we're really being consistent in our walk with Him and we're aware of His presence every day—and it keeps growing and growing and growing—watch out. It's going to keep growing until the day we get to the house.

And here he's beginning on that journey and he's experiencing some of what God has for him.

Now what happens when we win a victory that the Lord has encouraged? Those four kings could go back and lick their wounds, get fresh ammunition and come back and finish Abram, because he only has 318 servants.

And so that's what's filling his mind as we start the study in chapter 15. He knows he's a stranger in a strange land, he knows that he has a great God, but he also knows that he's been in conflict and he does not know what's going to happen.

“So after this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:”

Here comes “the word of the Lord”—THREE THINGS:

1. “Do not be afraid, Abram.”

There are many verses that speak about the fact that it’s wrong for us to fear. Over and over and over again. Somebody said there are 365 “fear nots” in the Bible. That’s one for every day. But there are so many of them that are so important to us.

Proverbs 29:25

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.

2 Timothy 1:7

God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and sound mind.

Isaiah 41:10

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yea I will help you; yea I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, ...

Remember what the angel said to Mary? She was thinking all kinds of things about the fact that she was going to be pregnant with a child and not knowing the Father, apart from the fact that it's the Spirit of God.

Luke 1:30

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

When we act out of fear it's all unbelief. It grieves the heart of God when we do not feel that He is adequate for the situation we're in therefore we have to be fearful of the outcome of those circumstances.

Isaiah 43:1-2

But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

We don't have to be afraid. When we're in the center of God's

will and we're committing the task that's before us to Him, we know the outcome is already predetermined by Him and we're going to be alright in the midst of it.

2. "I am your shield,"

This is good to know that anybody who's going to affect Abram in any way is going to have to deal with the God of Abraham before he ever gets to Abram.

It's like a military shield. It's a place of protection.

Psalm 84:11

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.

Isn't it good to know that He's there and He is in the business of protecting His own?

Remember what Satan's complaint was when Job experienced all that went on in the first chapter in his loss of everyone?
Satan said:

Job 1:10

"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so

that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

Psalm 29:11

The Lord gives strength to his people,
the Lord blesses his people with peace.

Do we really believe that? Do we believe that He intervenes and provides a shield of protection? Many of us can say that because we've experienced it in personal life when God intervened where our life could have been taken or snuffed out. And God was there to meet our needs.

Isaiah 54:17

no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord.

He's basically saying, "Abram, don't fear any new invasions, because if they even get close to the territory they're done. I am going to handle this so don't worry about it. I am your shield."

3. "I am ... your very great reward."

Understand that? What he's saying to him is, "I watched you when you refused to take that honorarium from those kings. I watched you when you willingly got involved with your 318

servants to liberate your nephew and all of their possessions. I was with you, but when those guys were going to load all those gifts on you, you said no way. I want to tell you, because you turned them down, I am your exceeding great reward.”

That’s everything. That’s all we could ever ask for.

“I am your ... reward.”

“Don’t be afraid, I am your shield, I am your very great reward.”

“Your reward, which will be yours Abram, will exceed everything that you refused from those kings. You’ve chosen the good part and it will not be taken from you. Lot lost everything, but you’re not losing a single thing, because you are proving that I’m the Lord of hosts and that I am your exceeding great reward. And I will never allow you to lose for honoring Me.”

Psalm 16:5

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;
you have made my lot secure.

It’s Thomas saying, “I’m not going to believe it if I can’t put fingers in His hands and in His side.”

And at the moment of revelation it’s, “My Lord and my God! Everything I’ve always dreamed of, a living risen Savior.”

Is He the reward to a lonely heart? You better believe it. When we're alone and calling upon Him, He's there. He is enough. He is indeed an exceedingly great reward.

The first time he speaks is pretty exciting, isn't it?

“Abram, you don't have a thing to worry about:”

1. “they're going to have to deal with Me before they get to you”—“I'm your shield,” and
2. “I am ... your exceeding great reward.”

He is everything He promised to be.

Joni Eareckson Tada wrote the following:

Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—EPHESIANS 5:19-20

Once I was discussing the subject of gratitude with a friend who had broken her ankle. For her, being on crutches wasn't fun. There were many appointments and travel plans she had to cancel. “I can accept a verse like 1 Thessalonians 5:18, ‘Give thanks *in* all circumstances...’” she sighed, looking at her leg cast, “but I don't think I could give thanks *for* this clunky thing.”

Something about her comment troubled me. People are willing to thank God *in* the midst of their circumstances for his grace, comfort, and sustaining power. But they draw a line when it comes to the circumstances themselves. We segregate God from the suffering he allows, as though a broken ankle merely “happens,” and God shows up after the fact. We don’t thank God for the problem, just for finding him in it.

But today’s verse underscores the supreme sovereignty of God over all suffering. The apostle Paul—who endured his share of tragedies—never considered his circumstances as tragic. He tells all believers we should be “always giving thanks to God the Father *for* everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (italics mine).
(source unknown)

She had this to say at the end:

I give God thanks [every day] for my quadriplegia. It has become the strange friend that helps me know Jesus better. It is the shadowy companion that walks with me daily, pulling and pushing me into the arms of the Savior where I find grace and comfort. Your affliction falls well within the overarching decrees of God. It comes from his wise and kind hand, and for that, you can give thanks. In it and for it.

Sovereign God, today I bring my affliction and disappointment before your throne. I thank you in it ... [and I thank you] for it ...
(source unknown)

Abram is now prepared for the beautiful stuff that's coming. Ready?

v. 2 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”

“But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’”

Now we turn to the SEED.

God said he was going to be a great nation, right? He has a barren wife, it's been ten years that they've been in the land being obedient, and she hasn't given any signs of pregnancy. And so he's really upset.

He's been waiting all this period of time and he's just saying, “Look, the options before me right now are Eliezer, my servant from Damascus, because we don't have any kids. If I die tomorrow, this is the guy that's going to get it.”

Now he is not mad. He's not disappointed. The scripture says, “He staggered not with the promise of God through unbelief.” We have to put that together.

There are legitimate concerns when the clock is running and nothing is happening. That's all he's doing. He's not mad at God.

The problem is, he has his focus off of the person and on the provision. And he's thinking, "Son, ten years. We're not getting any younger. I'm 85 and my wife is 75. When have you heard of a baby in an assisted living facility?"

Too many times we actually equate delay with a denial. We think that God is saying "no" by the fact that it isn't happening.

But the mystery of delay is always one of God's key tools to help us grow and appreciate what He's done for us and then that He will get the greater glory when the timing is perfect for the provision. He never misses on that. We see that in Joseph and we're going to see it here in Abram at the perfect time.

And so in the midst of all of it, in the human arena, spirits are fine-tuned by delays that take place. He's really not rebellious at all here. He's not challenging, he's just expressing resignation.

"Excuse me for being disappointed Lord, but all my hopes and ideas were wrong, obviously."

See he's limiting God now to this. He's feeling sorry for God's reputation. At this point nothing has happened. And self-pity is always satanic. And here he's moving in and our hero is becoming terribly vulnerable.

Corrie ten Boom made this kind of humorous and delightful statement:

(Each New Day by Corrie ten Boom)

“When I worry I go to the mirror and say to myself, ‘This tremendous thing which is worrying me is beyond a solution. It is especially too hard for Jesus Christ to handle.’ After I have said that, I smile and I am ashamed.”

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That’s where he is. “This is too big for God! He can’t handle this!” And then we walk away in shame because we realize His unlimited resources.

v. 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

“And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’”

“Lord, the delayed fulfillment tells me we’ve run out of time. I’ve misunderstood and now I’m saying to You that it’s going to be the offspring, Eliezer from Damascus. He’s going to be the one rather than any person that comes from me.”

Switching back to Joseph for a second. Isn’t this interesting how it parallels?

The cupbearer and the baker are put into prison with Joseph,

right? He is at that point anticipating that after a full year in prison unjustly he's going to be liberated by the memory of a cupbearer. And what's the last thing we read?

Genesis 4:23

The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

God's plan is two more years. That's difficult when we realize that he's still right where he was and he'll be there for two years. But that's God's perfect plan and we'll begin to see it all fall together in the picture. And it is not a denial.

Listen to what Warren Wiersbe says:

One of the basic lessons in “the school of faith” is: *God's will must be fulfilled in God's way and in God's time.* [There it is—God's will in God's time is when the promise will be fulfilled.] God did not expect Abraham and Sarah to figure out how to have an heir; all He asked was that they be available so He could accomplish His purposes in and through them. What Abraham and Sarah did not realize was that God was waiting for them to be “as good as dead” so that God alone would receive the power and glory.

(source unknown)

Now we have a while yet until they're as good as dead, okay? It's going to be another fifteen years. These are going to be tough years in our study.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He makes all things beautiful in His time, not ours.

v. 4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”

“Then the word of the Lord came to him:”

Isn't it good how God, just as soon as we get frustrated, He comes with an answer from the Word? This is the dialogue that's going on here. Now here comes the second message. He says to him:

“Then the word of the Lord came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.’”

He doesn't even mention Eliezer of Damascus. That's not even a thought. That's not even on the radar, as far as God's concerned. He just says, “That man will not be your heir. And then the other thing I want to tell you is that a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”

Ever noticed that sometimes we miss out on what God is trying to do by assuming that since Abram is the only one mentioned that anybody else can be the woman who bears the child, and it doesn't have to be Sarah because she's not

mentioned?

Oh how we jump to conclusions.

The very fact that he is mentioned, and he alone. Invalid assumptions will come in our next study to literally throw a wrench of havoc into all these purposes.

“The man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”

“Abraham, it might look impossible from your point of view, but there is nothing impossible with God.”

Luke 1:37

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful is He who calls you, and He will also bring it to pass.

It's not when everything is wonderful and turning up roses that we can tune up the praise and sing mightily to God. It's when we're in the midst in the valley of the shadow of death, when everything seems so inconsistent that we can say, “The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised.” (ref. Job 1:21)

When we get to verse 5 He's reinforcing His promise.

v. 5 He took him outside and said, “Look at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

“He took him outside and said, ‘Look at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”

Now remember what he said in our last passage? He said, “Look at the sand or the dust of earth. That’s going to be the magnitude of your seed.”

Now, instead of looking down, let’s look up. “Start counting the stars, Abram. And while you’re counting them, realize that your descendants are going to be as great as what you can see in the starry heavens.”

The promise is very clear that God is going to intervene in their lives and this seed that’s going to come from the Abrahamic Covenant is going to be beyond human comprehension.

Genesis 13:16

I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.

So it's another thing, but just an illustration of the magnitude of the descendants that are here in this second message. And it's coming from his own body and it'll be as great as the stars.

This is really the Gospel for the first time in any of the books of the Bible. And here it is in the first book—Genesis 15:6.

v. 6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

In other words, “Abram believed” what He said. And God knows that he does.

The apostle Paul took that illustration and brought it over into the New Testament and three times he and James actually—Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23—all use the same phrase: “Abram believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.”

We'll let that hang for just a second.

There are a lot of first occurrences in this passage:

1. “the word of the Lord came”—this is the first time that occurs.
2. “Do not be afraid”—that's the first time for that.

3. “believed”—the first time.
4. “count”—the first time.
5. “righteousness”—the first time.

All of those words are occurring for the first time in the Bible here in this particular context.

All this is Abram’s AMEN:

“Okay God, I’m 85. It’s impossible but I believe what You say and I’m going to trust You.” And it’s counted to his part. God speaks, Abram believes, and all is settled, and all assured, and he’s stayed now upon the Lord.

That’s exactly what happens in our salvation.

John 3:14, 15

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

Simply by faith in Jesus Christ.

v. 7 He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

“He also said to him, ‘I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.’”

Now he moves in this third message to the LAND and he says

“I am the one that brought you out and I’m the one who’s going to give you this land for you to take possession of it.”

v. 8 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

“But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?’”

In the back of his mind, he still has the issue about the SEED.

“Is one promise as good as the other? Can he switch over now and talk about the LAND? And tell me the truth that this is really going to happen? Or do I need some certification that it’ll happen?”

“How am I going to know that we’re going to get to take possession of it?”

It’s a lot easier just to watch than it is to wait really, for God to bring it all about. But He will, in the midst of our unbelief, do just exactly that. And what a wonderful record we have of it.

Look how the Lord answers it. Oh this is so good.

v. 9 So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

“So the Lord said to him, ‘Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.’”

Well, we’re going to have three animals and two birds. And he’s getting ready to institute the covenant.

What he’s getting ready to do is to institute what is called in scripture an UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT. That means it’s not conditioned on anything that Abram would do. It’s God saying, “I am going to do this and I’m obligating myself to see that it happens.”

It’s like God is saying:

“My promises depend totally on Me, not on you. It’s not a joint venture. My promises depend totally on Me.”

Now the best news in the whole world is that our salvation is an unconditional, eternal covenant! We have nothing to do with it!

“Eli, Eli Lama Sabachthani?”

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

That was God’s own Son instituting an unconditional covenant that’s appropriated by faith because the work has been done! The sacrifice is finished! There’s nothing we can do to add to it or take away from it! It is ours as a free gift!

It is so hard to talk to people who don’t really know that they’re saved. They can’t say that unless they are consumed with human works or a bad record. As though because of a bad past God has all of a sudden withdrawn what He provided earlier. Forget it.

John 10:28-29

I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.

We need to thank God that our destiny is secure! It’s an eternal transaction that’s been done!

“Abram, I want you to understand this.”

In patriarchal times the way they instituted a covenant, they didn’t have lawyers in those days thank goodness, the heifer, the goat and the ram were split. And then they put half on one side and half on the other side. So they have three on the split and a corridor down the middle. Then he puts a pigeon over

here and he puts the dove over here. So four carcasses.

And what he's getting ready to do is enter into the covenant. And the way they entered into a covenant, if it was a conditional covenant, the parties would walk between the pieces with the promises that were made and they would both be saying at the same time, "May what has happened to these animals happen to me if I don't fulfil my part of the promise that I have made to you." And therefore, that would be a conditional covenant dependent upon the obedience of both parties.

God is not going to have anything to do with that. God is going to pronounce an anesthetic that's going to put Abram completely out of the picture and then He alone is going to walk between the pieces. And that's the beautiful end of this covenant—it's unconditional.

v. 10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

"Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half."

And so now we have everything ready for this wonderful, wonderful covenant that's going to be instituted.

v. 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses,

but Abram drove them away.

“Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.’

Who are these “birds of prey”? They are the nations that hate Israel and would never want to have a covenant whereby God would have a chosen people.

We can say the birds are EGYPT.

We could say the birds are ARABS.

We could say the birds are ISLAM.

We could say they’re CANAAN,

they’re GREECE,

they’re ROME,

they’re GERMANY,

they’re anybody who hated the Jews and would long for them to be cursed.

And these birds represent that, but “Abram drove them away.”

v. 12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep

sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

“As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep,”

Thank goodness, we got him out of the way.

“and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.”

It’s just like any surgeon who is going to do work on someone. He has to put the patient to sleep before he can get it done. And so he puts them out of the picture and then he does his work.

And so with regard to the SEED and the LAND, he’s not going to have anything to do with that. God is going to see to it that all of that is going to happen according to His time.

Corrie ten Boom said:

(Making Sense Out of Suffering by Peter Kreeft)

[In] the depths of a Nazi death camp, “No matter how deep our darkness, He is deeper still.”

p. 237

And here Abram is put aside.

v. 13 Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not

their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.

“Then the Lord said to him, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.’”

All he’s saying is, when Joseph comes on the scene, Joseph is the fulfillment of this.

The covenant said “four hundred years” they’ll be in a land that’s not theirs. Joseph is the first and it’s going to end up 430 years before they come out under Moses.

But it’s all part of God’s plan here and so this fixes the scene of what’s going to happen to the seed in the future.

v. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

“But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.”

What’s that? That’s the ten plagues, isn’t it? When Moses went down there, Pharaoh just wouldn’t have anything to do with it. There were ten plagues and then finally they came out of Egypt with great possessions. The people were so glad to get rid of them, they gave them everything. And so they were loaded down with all kinds of benefits—just like the covenant

says.

We didn't realize this was back here in this covenant? That's the way the Bible fits together and it's God fulfilling His promises.

v. 15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.

“You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.”

“Man you won't be around for all that, but you're going to go to be with the Lord at a good old age.”

v. 16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

“In the fourth generation”—that's 400 years—“your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

There are people known as the Amorites. God is monitoring their sin levels and He knows that at the 400-year mark their sin is going to be full and they're ripe for judgment.

How full is the sin element in the United States of America?

Every time we read this it should make us tremble. The

sovereign God is at work and very much aware of nations and their reasons for existence.

2 Chronicles 7:14

if my people, who are called by my name, they shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

At the 400-year mark the time is full and the judgment's going to come. At the 721-year mark, the northern kingdom of Israel went away into Syria. At the 586-year mark, Judah went away into Babylon. Their iniquity was already full.

v. 17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

“When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.”

God is the one doing the promising and God is the one who's sealing the covenant. He's the “smoking firepot” all by Himself, passing “between the pieces.” Abraham has nothing to do with that.

v. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this

land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—

“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—”

If in fact what we have said is true, that this is an unconditional eternal covenant, then who owns the title deed to the land forever?

We’re forced to understand that God chose these people as His chosen people. And He chose this land to be the land. And He chose the seed of this people through whom His Son should come and purchase eternal redemption, which likewise is an unconditional covenant of eternal salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ.

It’s the whole Bible in just a few sentences.

But the picture is described here so clearly. And before this is all over, we’re going to see that God says it’s an **ETERNAL TRANSACTION**. It’s been given to us forever, never to be taken away.

Now those few verses just tell us about some of the people living in the land.

v. 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,

“the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,”

v. 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,

“Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,”

v. 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites and Jebusites.”

“Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites and Jebusites.”

And Texans always add the TERMITES.

There are twelve lessons that come out of the passage.

Lesson #1: We need not fear, for the Lord is our powerful Protector and Provider.

Lesson #2: The Lord is our Shield and exceeding Great Reward.

Lesson #3: The sovereign Lord is the One Who is always faithful to fulfill His promises.

Lesson #4: “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21).

Lesson #5: “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

Lesson #6: The Lord’s delays are not His denials.

Lesson #7: “He has made everything beautiful in its time . . .” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Lesson #8: The single condition for blessing to Abram and salvation to us is described in verse 6: “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

Lesson #9: The covenant made with Abram is unconditional for it is only the Lord Who is going between the pieces.

Lesson #10: Salvation is a complete act of God. We have nothing to do with it at all.

Lesson #11: A certain time of judgment will come when iniquity is full.

Lesson #12: “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Father, we thank You for this marvelous passage. What a rich experience to trace Your hand through the forefather of it all, Abraham. And that You talked to him six times. You told him You were everything he needed in the first verse. Then You told him in the remaining talks that You had with him that You were the one obligated to provide the seed, and You are the one who’s going to give the land. And then to prove it all, You instituted this unconditional covenant. We rejoice in that. Lord may we like Abram be blessed because we believe God and it was counted to us for righteousness’ sake. In Jesus’

name we pray. Amen.

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What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM: “God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

Study Number Three – Genesis 15:1-21

NOTES

v. 1 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

v. 2 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”

v. 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

v. 4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”

v. 5 He took him outside and said, “Look at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

v. 6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

v. 7 He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

v. 8 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

v. 9 So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

v. 10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

v. 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

v. 12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

v. 13 Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.

NOTES

v. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

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v. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—

v. 19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,

v. 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,

v. 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 15:1-21 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does the Lord promise to Abram in verse 1?

3. What is Abram's response in verses 2 & 3?

4. What word of the Lord comes to Abram in verses 4 & 5?

5. What object lesson does the Lord give to Abram to reinforce His promise?

6. What is Abram's response to what the Lord has said, and how does the Lord respond in verse 6?

7. What is the question which Abram asks of the Lord in verse 8?

8. How does the Lord respond in the remaining verses of the passage?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: We need not fear, for the Lord is our powerful Protector and Provider.

LESSON #2: The Lord is our Shield and exceeding Great Reward.

LESSON #3: The sovereign Lord is the One Who is always faithful to fulfill His promises.

LESSON #4: “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21).

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