

## **Genesis 15: God's Covenant With Abram**

### **4-15-18 PM**

Genesis 15 begins with God visiting Abram and making a profound statement to him. God tells him that He is his shield (protection) and his reward. This prompts Abram to respond with a question: How will this happen. God shows Abram the stars, and makes the pledge that he will have that many descendants. Then God has Abram enact a covenant ceremony, reveals the future to him, and reiterates the promises He has for Abram.

#### **GOD'S PROMISE**

When God speaks to Abram, He makes two statements. First, He is Abram's shield. This is a common promise of God to those who follow Him. He will be our protection. We don't need to be vested in things of this world to be protected; God Himself protects us. We need to learn to trust this. Second, God tells Abram that His reward is great; some translations say God is his reward. There is a great reward for all who seek God.

#### **ABRAM'S FEAR**

When God speaks to Abram, the response of Abram seems to be some doubt. Abram's fear is common to all men who seek God: what if God does not do what He promised? Abram was 75 years old when he left to wander; Isaac won't be born until he is 100 years old. That means he waited 25 years for this, and that could bring up some doubt in anyone.

Doubt is both common to all and NOT sinful. Consider John the Baptist in Matthew 11. But doubt is a weakness and it needs to be dealt with immediately. We need to talk to God about it (prayer) and talk to others about it (confession) and study the Scriptures to overcome it.

#### **ABRAM BELIEVED GOD**

One of the most powerful statements in the life of Abram is this: *"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness"*. Let us understand that this was NOT a "Plan of Salvation for Sinners". Abram was not turning to God for the first time; God had already given him works to be obedient to (remember James 2). This was the reward of the true obedient believer, a credit of righteousness. Abram had reason to believe because FAITH included his works.

#### **COVENANT SYMBOLS**

When Abram asks God "how may I know that I will possess it?", God has Abram enact a covenant. This is not to say that the covenant between God and Abram did not exist; but this is the first time that it is called a covenant. This ceremony is full of powerful symbolism; passing through these sacrifices (consider Jeremiah 34:18-19) could be called a path of blood; Hebrews 9:22 says *"and according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"*.

Darkness fell on Abram after this, and scripture say he fell into a great terror. Then God spoke to Abram, and revealed the future. Why speak in this moment of darkness and terror? Perhaps we

might consider that the future is frightening, and to reveal everything that will come is not always easy. Consider that we are told that *"we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God"* in Acts 14:22. Would we want to know every bad thing to come? Abram, in darkness, must see by faith and not sight.

When the Israelites later would pass through the Red Sea, they were led by manifestations of God (a pillar of cloud/smoke by day and a pillar of fire at night) that are similar/identical to those here. As they passed through that sea, perhaps these thoughts brought them comfort; their father Abram had passed through such things, and emerged victorious.

Today we pass through blood to enter into a covenant in Christ. *"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death"* - Romans 6:3. Too, we read *"how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* - Hebrews 9:14.