



READ: Genesis 15:1-18a, (ESV)

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And [Abram] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram...

ENTER THE STORY:

Less than 200 years ago, when people wanted to confirm a promise, they would simply shake hands. This was a symbol of trust between two people. The handshake was to represent the "firmness" of the agreement the two parties were making, and it meant that each of them would be true to their word. But long before that, during Abram's time...the same concept was made with something called a covenant.

Today, we mainly use this word when we are talking about a marriage, but the word covenant in Hebrew actually has a very interesting meaning. It is the word *berit* (*bey-REET*): which is a *solemn binding agreement*. This particular ceremony almost always involved a cutting and passing between pieces of flesh. We see this in the Hebrew word that typically precedes it: *karat* (*ka-RAHT*) which means *to cut*. This means that when people "made a covenant" they were quite literally "carving out an agreement."

In Abraham's time – it meant everything. If someone made a covenant with you, you knew they would be true to their word, because this was a very serious agreement. In fact, in the story above, we see God tell Abram to cut up some animals and make a path with their bloody carcasses. This was called a "blood trail" and the people making the promise would walk between the dead animals with their hands out symbolizing this idea... "As God is our witness, may this happen to me or worse if I break this covenant." *Do you see how serious this was?*

God made some BIG promises to Abram in chapter 12, and here he is expanding on them even more.

Abram...go outside and look up at the stars, and count them if you can. *THAT* is how many offspring you will have.

- Have you ever gone outside at night when the sky is full of stars? Have you ever tried to count them? It's impossible. God
- wanted Abram to be in awe of how big this promise was, *BUT*...we've seen this word before, haven't we? In Genesis
- 3:15, God said that one day – an offspring from Eve's family line would crush the head of the serpent and defeat him
- forever. The word "offspring" in the Hebrew language is the word "seed" and it refers to one single male person.
- Is it Isaac? Yes and No. Isaac would be the first of Abram's descendants with Sarai, yes, but it was bigger than that.
- Galatians 3:16 gives us some insight into the real promise God is making Abraham. *"Now the promises were made to*
- *Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your*
- *offspring," who is Christ."*
- **It's always been about Jesus!** It started with the prophecy and promise in Genesis 3:15 of the Serpent Crusher, and
- here God expounds on that promise with Abram. And this, my friends, is what Abram believed in.
- Because of God's promise to him, he knew that a single, future descendant would come through his family, and would
- bless the entire world (*Genesis 12:3*).
- This is what Abram's faith rested on...and his faith in that special someone is what "reckoned him righteous," a legal
- accounting term, which means, *"Abram was counted (seen) as being in right standing with God."*
- In order to be saved today, one must look back into the past and put their faith in the cross and what Christ accomplished
- for us with his death and resurrection. Abram put his faith forward into the future, but his faith still centered on that
- special seed that would come through his line...on Christ, the Messiah and Savior.
- **Everyone for all time has been saved by faith through the grace of God! Everyone.**
- Jesus cut a new covenant for those that would put their faith in him...but he did not walk through a bloody trail lined
- with the bodies of dead animals. He offered up his own body to be figuratively torn in two so he could say in *John 14:6*,
- *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life...no one comes to the Father but THROUGH me."* Now all who desire to come close
- to God must walk the trail the Jesus has laid with his own flesh. But be careful...for it is a narrow trail, and most will not
- see him for the treasure he is.
- *Do you see it? Do you see God's precise attention to detail?*
- This alone should cause us to bend our knee this Christmas season and exalt Jesus to his rightful place in our hearts.
-  **PRAY:** *Lord, we bend our heads low today as we kneel in awe of your purpose and plan that started at the very*
- *beginning and continued to be revealed throughout the pages of scripture. May we never forget the cost of the*
- *covenant Jesus cut for us and may we always see Jesus as the treasure he is and recognize how great his sacrifice was*
- *for us. Amen.*