

GENESIS 15

THE DEAL IN THE DARK THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY BRING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Last week we read about the great battle of the plains in which Abram took his men and rescued Lot as well as many others that lived in the cities of the plain. Just as Abram was used to rescue Lot, God uses us to rescue others. We just need to be conscious of the battles around us that are being fought on a daily basis.

Abram is now living in the aftermath of this victory, but it doesn't mean that he will live a life of peace. After the mountaintop comes the valley. First of all, the kings he defeated have the option to retaliate. A king must save face you know. We also have to note that Abram is now "the big dog on the block." This means that others wanting that title may take the opportunity to knock him off in order that they may be the big dogs on the block.

Of course, Abram doesn't desire all this attention. He is a practical man. He simply did what had to be done. He had no desire to make a name for himself. But God had other plans for him. God did desire to make a name for Abram. Think of that for a minute; God wanted something more for Abram than Abram wanted for himself. I believe most of the time we are on the other end of that spectrum. Many of us want more from God and we want it on our own terms. It is just this attitude that brings about stress, and frustration with the directions of our lives.

We all have a part to play in God's plan. The secret is to find that part and play it with all we have. There are only so many leading roles in any

production. Abram has a leading role. There are many in the supporting cast – that would be us as well as others.

James 4:7-10

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Our place isn't Abram's place. We have to maintain the context, but there is still plenty of application for us here.

This week we pick up just after the events of the battle on the plain. Genesis 15:1 starts with "after these things." So we will pick up where we left off with Abram asking God about the promise He gave him. So look at Genesis 15 verse 1.

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

2 But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

7 Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

First use of the phrase "The Word of the Lord."

John 1:1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Many of us are familiar with these verses. They are one of the lynch pins we use against those that say Jesus is not God. (JW's) But have you ever wondered where John got his theology when he referred to Jesus as "the Word?" Well, we just read it in Genesis 15.

That may seem strange to some, but the Apostles didn't have a NT. They had what we refer to as the OT and were of course privy to what Jesus had to say concerning Himself in the OT.

We read of Jesus' incarnation in the Gospels and Acts. But that isn't the first time He appeared on earth. As a matter of fact there are many OT instances where He appeared. This is known as a "Christophany." And it is what we see in Genesis 15.

Abram had a vision. He was awake not asleep. It wasn't a dream. We read that the word of the Lord appeared to Abram. The word was visible. He also appeared to Samuel: 1 Sam. 3:1,7,21 and also to Jeremiah: 1:2, 4, 11. We aren't just talking about a voice heard in these men's heads. And we aren't talking about just an audible external voice. In Jeremiah 1:9 we read that the word of the Lord reached out and touched Jeremiah.

This is not a vision. This is the WORD speaking to Abram “man to man.”

And this instance as well as the others is the basis for what John wrote. Therefore, you can tell those that try to say John contrived these things to go back and read their OT for the basis of John’s theology.

Abram is told not to be afraid in verse one. This was a legitimate fear. Remember, the kings had the option of coming back to settle the score at any time.

GOD KNEW ABRAM WAS AFRAID! And He didn’t rebuke him for his fear. Some say that all fear is doubt. They can then put a guilt trip on you for being scared about something. God didn’t do this.

People of faith are also people with feelings. Feelings should not be discounted, though they aren’t to be the driving factor in our lives. To maximize the mind and will while minimizing our emotions can lead to an unbalanced life. Jesus was a real man and He openly expressed His emotions of joy, sorrow, righteous indignation (holy anger) and love.

We ought to be honest concerning our feelings, especially with God.

David Viscott wrote: *“When a person assumes responsibility for his feelings, he assumes responsibility for his world.”*

The **Boxer Rebellion**, or **Yihequan Movement** was a violent [anti-foreign](#) and [anti-Christian](#) uprising which took place in [China](#) towards the end of the [Qing dynasty](#) between 1899 and 1901. It was initiated by the Militia United in Righteousness (*Yihetuan*), known in English as the "Boxers", and was motivated by proto-[nationalist](#) sentiments and opposition to [imperialist expansion](#) and associated [Christian missionary](#) activity. During this three-year episode, J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission suffered to a great extent. He once admitted to a friend, “I cannot read; I cannot think; I cannot even pray; but I can

trust.” It was a dark time of fear in which it seemed God had removed His hand from the work He had had started through Taylor. Times like these hit us all. Feelings of fear and unbelief hit us all. We aren’t alone in this and neither was Abram. Therefore we should look to him as an example. Be honest with God and take the time to hear His encouragement as Abram did.

God’s remedy for Abram’s fear was to remind him of who He was.

“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

God would protect him and reward him for his faith and obedience.

GOD’S TIMING

2 But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”

“Are we there yet?”

Abram was sure of God's promise to him, but was wondering when it would come to pass. Perhaps he was like us. Maybe he was beginning to doubt. We can do the same thing in that we have a tendency to think that God's promises will be fulfilled instantly. However, everything is to be done in God's timing. Abram is going to learn this.

It was customary at that time that the oldest son would be the heir of the household. However, if no son were born to the family, then one of the children born to a slave would be the heir. Eliezer had the position as “Chief of Staff” and therefore would be the heir to Abram’s estate. We will read of him later in Genesis.

God says that this won't be the case. Look and count the stars. I brought you out of the land of Ur, (The world) to give you this inheritance. I didn't bring you this far for nothing.

Maybe we can also identify with Abram at this point also.

Have you ever believed that God had made you a promise and there appeared to be some glorious plan that God was working toward in your life? I'm sure some of us have felt that way at times. We are sure of what we heard and it appeared that things were moving in that direction only to stall for a time.

What do we do when it appears that God is doing nothing?

Abram and Sarai weren't getting any younger. Neither of them were "spring chickens" any longer. Abram had fallen back on the law of inheritance because it seemed impossible for God to fulfill His promise. Guess what – **THAT WAS THE POINT!**

One of the basic rules in the school of faith is: *God's will must be fulfilled in God's way and in God's time.*

God did not expect Sarai and Abram 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. God was waiting for them to "be as good as dead" so that God alone would receive the power and the glory.

Once again, God did not rebuke Abram for these questions and fear, instead He gave him the assurance he needed.

1 Peter 5:7

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. (NKJV)

7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (ESV)

Now Abram asks the next logical question. He essentially says, “OK Lord, you have assured me that I will inherit these promises, but how will I know that?”

8 And he said, “Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?”

Hebrews 11:8 already assured us that Abram was counted as a man of faith when he left Ur to go to Canaan. Genesis 15:6 is said to be the John 3:16 of the OT. There are only five words to this verse in the original Hebrew. This verse is quoted 3 times in the NT: Gal. 3:6; Rom. 4:3 and James 2:23.

- Abraham ***believed*** – to lean your whole weight upon; Gal. 3 focuses on belief
- Abraham was ***counted*** - to impute – to put to one’s account; Rom. 4 deals with righteousness being imputed to us (Righteousness is our greatest need)
- Abraham was counted ***righteous*** – seen as just – James 2 explains righteousness

9 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

THE BARATH – CUTTING A DEAL/ COVENANT

This was common in Abram's day. If the parties involved in the barath failed to honor their word, they were to incur the same fate as the animals that were butchered.

Jer. 34:18 – 20

***18 And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it—
19 the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf—
20 I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.***

Verses 13-16 God gives Abram a timeline. The promises will be fulfilled long after he dies.

When Abram began his pilgrimage, God told him that He would show him the land. (12:1) Later He told Abram that he would give it to him. (13:15-17) Now He tells him that it will be given to his descendants. We have yet to see the fruition of this promise. Solomon exercised dominion over a vast area, but he did not possess it. There were still foreign kings within those boundaries that paid tribute to Solomon.

For centuries the people of Israel had no land. People were re-vamping their theology in order to explain this. In 1932, G. Campbell Morgan, the great Bible expositor wrote: *“I am now quite convinced that the teaching of scripture as a whole is that there is no future for Israel as an earthly people at all.”*

He wasn't an anti-Semite, he was just convinced that since Israel hadn't existed as a nation for some 2,000 years, that apparently some of his theology had to be re-hashed.

But then on May 14, 1948, the nation of Israel was rebirthed! It was at that time that a renewed interest in Bible prophecy began.

GOD ALWAYS DELIVERS ON HIS PROMISES!

Some of the things we are promised, we won't be around to see. Many of the promises given to our children we will never see. Whether we see the fruition of the promise or not, God is faithful to deliver what He has promised.

In verse 16 we also see one of the reasons for what we might see as a delay. God will wait on the iniquity of the Amorites to reach a certain limit.

Many times the promise we are waiting on is dependent on how God is dealing with someone else. God showed the Amorites grace by giving them time to repent. When they didn't, God brought in the nation of Israel to take the land. We want God to be gracious with us so we have to be patient in order that He can be gracious to others. We don't live in a vacuum. When God blesses us it affects others, and vice versa.

17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:

“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— 19 the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

The final part of the barath

God put Abram to sleep so that he wouldn't have anything to do with it. It had to be God doing the work. Remember Abram was trying to stay awake and shoo away the buzzards.

Sometimes we get spiritual sleep apnea. We want to wake up and help God. He wants us to keep our hands off of the promise. When Abram was exhausted then God could work. When our backs are to the wall and we can no longer fight our battles, then God can work on our behalf and He will get all the glory. We will reap the benefits.

Verses 18-21 give the boundaries of the Promised Land

- It was God who made promises to Abram, not the other way around.
- After the mountaintop comes the valley
- God's will must be fulfilled God's time and in God's way.
- Abram was not rebuked for his questions and fear.
- Abraham believed God and righteousness was imputed to him.
- It was 25 years between God's original promise and Isaac's birth.
- Israel, as a nation was only reborn nearly 70 years ago. This barath was made around 1921 BC.
- Abraham believed God. Do you?