

Genesis Chapter 15 – God’s Covenant with Abraham

Context: Abraham is coming off of a major victory. He is spent from a physical, emotional, and spiritual point of view.

God is pleased with Abraham: Great Encouragement – Gen.15:1-6

^{GE 15:1} (When? After Ch 14 –Abram’s victory) After this, **the word of the LORD** (1st ref in scripture) came to Abram in a vision (not a dream) : (Why? Abram was afraid – let down after victory – Elijah after Mt. Carmel) **"Do not be afraid** (84 time in scripture – including what the angel said to Mary concerning Jesus), Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." (**God is Abram’s protector against all/any foes and HE is Abram’s reward** – Abram had rejected the spoils of victory from Sodom and Gomorrah).

Abram’s concern/fear/frustration/fatigue(10yrs had passed since God’s promise to Abram)

^{GE 15:2} 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?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

Divine Assurance

^{GE 15:4} 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." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and **count the stars** (other metaphors **Gen. 13:16 dust of the earth; Gen. 22:17 – sand on the seashore**) --if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Abram Believes!

^{GE 15:6} Abram **believed** (emphatic AMEN – It shall be so!) the LORD, and he credited it to him as **righteousness** (1st occurrence of this word/concept -set right with God (not “as if” but “IS”) – as a result of faith in God).

God’s Covenant with Abram: God’s confirmation of Abram’s Faith - Gen. 15:7-21

Foundation based on God’s character and revelation to Abram.

^{GE 15:7} He also said to him, "**I am the LORD** (Jehovah – God’s unchanging and unchangeable presence and character. “I AM”), who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans (**Renewed declaration of his divine purpose: God initiated and on-going commitment to Abram**) to give you this land to take possession of it."

Abraham’s desire for confirmation, not faithlessness (Mary’s reaction vs. Zacharias in gospels)

^{GE 15:8} But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"

Preparation for the covenant

^{GE 15:9} 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."

Abraham obeys: Blood covenant - ancient method of ratifying a solemn agreement.

^{GE 15:10} 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. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram **drove them away**. (We must play our part and be vigilant! – God expects this from us. Faith must lead to action!).

The Message of the Covenant

^{GE 15:12} As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

1. Abram's seed will suffer exile, bondage, and affliction

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.

2. God will deliver Abram's decedents – foreshadowing of a great display of God's power.

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

3. Abram himself will experience great peace – God hints of a far boarder purpose!

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

4. Abram is called to exercise patience (short term – heir; longer term – God doesn't reveal)

¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." (much has yet to happen for the fulfillment of God's plan).

Making of the Covenant

GE 15:17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a (Symbols of God's presence) smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. (Passing along the path between the sacrifices signaled God's personal ratification of the covenant, giving Abram a Divine guarantee). Traditionally, both parties in the covenant would walk together along the path. In this instance, only the Lord passed between the pieces. God did not need Abram to pass in order for the covenant to be ratified. It was a solemn covenant from Jehovah to Abram.

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-- ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites." This promise to Abram has yet to be fulfilled. It will happen in God's time.

5 Divine Covenants in Scripture

1. Noah – never to send another flood (Rainbow)
2. Abraham – Great blessing through his Seed. Descendants too numerous to count.
3. Moses and Israel – The Law
4. David – The promise of a Son
5. New Covenant – Justification through Jesus (God's only Son) (Bread & Cup)

Only the Mosaic covenant is conditional. The other four are covenants of grace. The law proved once and for all that we could not be justified by our actions – not capable.

Divine Action

Noteworthy that only God passed through the pieces, and not Abram as well. Divine covenant is not a mutual agreement, but a divine promise assured and ratified by means of a visible pledge of its fulfillment. God promises, God gives, God assures.

(Heb. 6:16-20): ^{HEB 6:16} Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷ Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. ¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Summary

God has much more planned for Abram than he could ever imagine. The same is true for all of us who believe. We should take God at his Word. We are not to fear, because God is our protector and our true reward. He will deliver us in the proper time. Gal. 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.