

Genesis

The Book of Origins
Week 4

We are continuing our study from the book of Genesis

Chapters 13-17 The Flesh vs. The Will of God

WK 1: Chapter 13 - Lot's choice and Abram's portion

WK 2-3: Chapter 14 - Lot's warning and Abram's blessing

WK 4-5: Chapter 15 - God's Covenant with Abram

Chapter 15

Review of chapter 14

Outline

Observations

Spiritual Lessons

This is our plan for tonight,

We will begin with a review of last week

We will read chapter 15 and follow an outline

We will make some observations from verses 1 to 6 go over Spiritual Lessons and Lord willing next week we will finish chapter 15.

Review - Genesis 14

V1- 12 Lot's warning

V13- 16 Abram to the rescue

V17-24 Melchizedek and the king of Sodom

Let's begin with a quick review... I recommend glancing down at your Bible to help you follow.

Chapter 14 begins with the account of an international war of 5 kings against 4 . After 12 years of paying tribute the 5 kings, one of these 5 was the king of Sodom, rebelled against Chedorlaomer and 3 other kings. War broke out on the valley of Siddim, the 5 kings suffered a nasty defeat and the 4 kings captured Lot and everything he had. We read on V12 that Lot was captured because he was living in Sodom. We learned from Lot's story that our association with this world is the ruin of our testimony and the reason why many times Christians become captive with the world in the consequences of sin.

In V13 to 16 we see God rescuing Lot by the hand of Abram taking only 318 men against 4 kings who had already defeated 5 others. That day God didn't only rescue Lot, He also rescued the king of Sodom, and freed the land from oppression. From here we learned of our responsibility to be God's agents to rescue the lost with the Gospel and our brothers when they get caught in the

consequences of following this world. We learned from this account that a rescue involves faith in God, dependance on Him, a loving and gentle heart, risk, organization, strategy, and sometimes sadly, we have to wait until a brother or sister is in a place where he or she is willing to receive help or has no other option.

In V17 to 24 we read about the meetings Abram had with Melchizedek, king of peace and the king of Sodom. We learned of how these interactions are a model for our own interactions with The Lord and with this world. In our interaction with the Lord we embrace His fellowship with us, we are blessed by His words to us, we are comforted by His presence, we commune with Him and we give Him honor.

In our interactions with this world our goal like Abram's is to be a witness of our God. We reject personal credit for His salvation, we reject the handsome offers of this world that would corrupt a free offer of the Gospel, we reject offers that would keep us from giving glory to God and leave us with perpetual debts. We also make decisions like Abram by personal convictions that make no sense to this world, And like Abram also we are gentle yet firm in our convictions. All of this with the goal to make known God to this world and lead others to believe Christ.

Chapter 15

Review of chapter 14

Outline

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Outline

V1- The Word of the Lord comes to Abram

V2-4 Abram's first question and God's answer

V5-6 God's invitation and Abram's faith

V7 God continues speaking

V8 Abram's second question

V9 -17 God's answer with object lessons

V18-21 God concludes this word to Abram with a covenant

This is an account of a conversation between God and Abram that highlights

1) God's outreach v1,

2) Abram's inability to contribute with God in the flesh with his ideas and efforts v2-3 and later in 9-17, and 3) Abram's only alternative to respond to God in faith v6. Abram's faith in V6 is the only part where Abram's participation is received by God in this conversation .

Let's follow our outline as we read...

V1 God reaches out to Abram after he rescues lot and meets with Melchizedek and the king of Sodom. **read**

V2-4 Abram has a question and God graciously answers him - **read**

V5-6 God leads Abram to have faith - **read**

V7 After what appears to be an interruption from Abram on V2-3, God continues speaking adding to what he said in V1. - **read**

V8 - Abram is anxious again - In his first question Abram asked about his descendants, in this second question Abram asks how he can possibly know that he will possess the land. - **read**

V9 God asks him to bring a set of 5 clean animals with specific characteristics. All these animals appear later in the book of Leviticus in the sacrifices that God prescribed for Israel. These animals became typical of the sacrifice of Christ. **read**

Many hours passed between the previous evening when God asked Abram to count the stars to the next day as Abram was busy preparing these animals to enter into a covenant with God.

In V10 to 17 we see Abram's inability to be an active part in this covenant

In V10-11 We see Abram's inability to make a clean presentation of the elements of the covenant - **read**

In V8 Abram had asked in reference to the land "how can I know that I am to possess it?" Here we see Abram's inability to predict or control the future - **read v12-16**

Finally in V17 - we see Abram's inability to make a bilateral agreement with God - **read 17**

In V18 to 21 in answer to Abram's question "How can I know I am to possess the land?" God enters into an unconditional LITERAL covenant with Abram that gives him details of the land he and his descendants will possess. We will discuss the extent of this promise and some of its implications next week. **read 18-21**

One observation I don't want to miss from in this chapter and others that follow...

Notice Abram could not correspond to God's promises in the flesh. His efforts, ideas, resolutions, and works could not be offered in exchange or as a supplement for His promises. He could only correspond to God and His promises with faith.

Chapter 15

Review of chapter 14

Outline

Observations

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Lets make some observations from the first 6 verses

Genesis 15

V1 The word of the Lord comes to Abram

Preventing Abram from pride

Preventing Abram from fears

Reassuring Abram of God's faithfulness

15:1 - **read** Coming from a battle and meetings with Melchizedek and the king of Sodom, God understands Abram and how he feels. In verse 1 God pronounces words of comfort to Abram. This statement from God would help Abram in three ways:

1. This statement prevents Abram's pride after a great victory - We know how easy it is after experiencing a great Spiritual victory from the Lord to fall into pride or to give ourselves some credit.
2. This statement calms Abrams fears of retaliation by reminding him of God's protection- Not "I will give you a shield" but "I am your shield"
3. This statement reminds Abram that he made the right choice when he rejected the reward offered by the king of Sodom. The world may have called Abram a fool for not taking any spoil but God reminds Abram and us "I am your great reward".

Does God meant these words just for Abram or are they meant for us as well? We will answer that question later but right now I have a different question for you...

How would you have translated this statement from God if it had been spoken to you? What would be the first practical way to make a claim from this statement? Being honest my initial translation from hearing God saying He is my shield would have been that I am invincible and from hearing He is my reward I would have thought of health and prosperity. However Abram translates this statement in a different way. His ambitions are not health and wealth but the promises of God.

V2-4 Abram's first question and God's answer

V2 - Abram asks The Sovereign God

V3 - Abram has an idea for the Sovereign God

V4- The Sovereign God answers Abram

Read V2

V2 Notice here Abram is seeking the promise of God. "but Abram" this "but" appears like an interruption to what God was saying, there is something burning in Abram's heart. The text reads "*Lord ,God What will you give me?*". The humbleness and hope of Abram in God that preface his question can get lost in the NKJV I have been reading. The NET bible translates "Sovereign God" - Adonai Yahweh. what will you give me (as a reward) since I continue to be childless". Abram is not questioning God He is recognizing that God is the Sovereign Master and He can do even what seems impossible to all. Abram is an old man, his wife is barren, it is not like time was running out to have kids, time had already ran out a long time ago. Going childless makes his reward empty and Abram wants to know how God will bring him descendants. Abram's approach to asking God is the right approach when we have questions before God. We should preface any question we want to ask

the Lord the way Abram prefaced - Sovereign Master - You are in control, you decide what to do, please direct me. You may have a question of something that seems unsolvable... Sovereign Master - How will this happen? Sovereign Lord - How will I give you glory in this situation? - Sovereign God - How would I know this is your will.

Well, in our text Abram had a question and he also had an idea that seemed possible for him. v2-3 - **read**

But in V4 The Sovereign God answers Abram - read

This is also an important reminder: Any idea that rests in the power of the flesh is not God's way. Any idea that is not of faith is not God's way.

Any idea that is not God's way no matter how clever it is, is a bad idea. See next slide

Abram is leaning on his own understanding, he is offering is what he “could” do by the flesh to try to achieve the promise. But God’s works will never be limited to what we consider possible.

We have to be aware of this tendency of Abram that also exists in me, to limit God and solve things our own way. This tendency of Abram is also our tendency when our faith turns into worry just because we can't figure out God’s plan and cannot wait for what God will do. This worry of Abram would lead him later on to act in the flesh to take Hagar and have Ishmael.

Just a quick note on Eliezer before we move on. Eliezer is portrayed as worthy servant. So good that Abram is willing to name him his heir in absence of a child. If Jewish tradition is right Eliezer appears again in Genesis 24 when he is entrusted to find a wife for Isaac. Eliezer is a good servant model for us.

Proverbs 3:5-6

*5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own
understanding;*

***6**In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.*

return to previous slide after reading

Abram believed in God V5-6

God took the initiative

Abram was lead by God to believe in a simple way - asking Him to number the stars.

Abram's faith comes in the midst of questions

Abram's faith and justification are the pattern for how the Gospel is received

Read 5-6

We observe on V5 that God takes the initiative to produce faith in Abram. He takes him out to see the stars in a vision. It is God's idea to use object lessons to explain spiritual truths and invite faith in Him. God always takes the initiative to produce faith by His word. We also have the commission to take the initiative to produce faith using The Word of God.

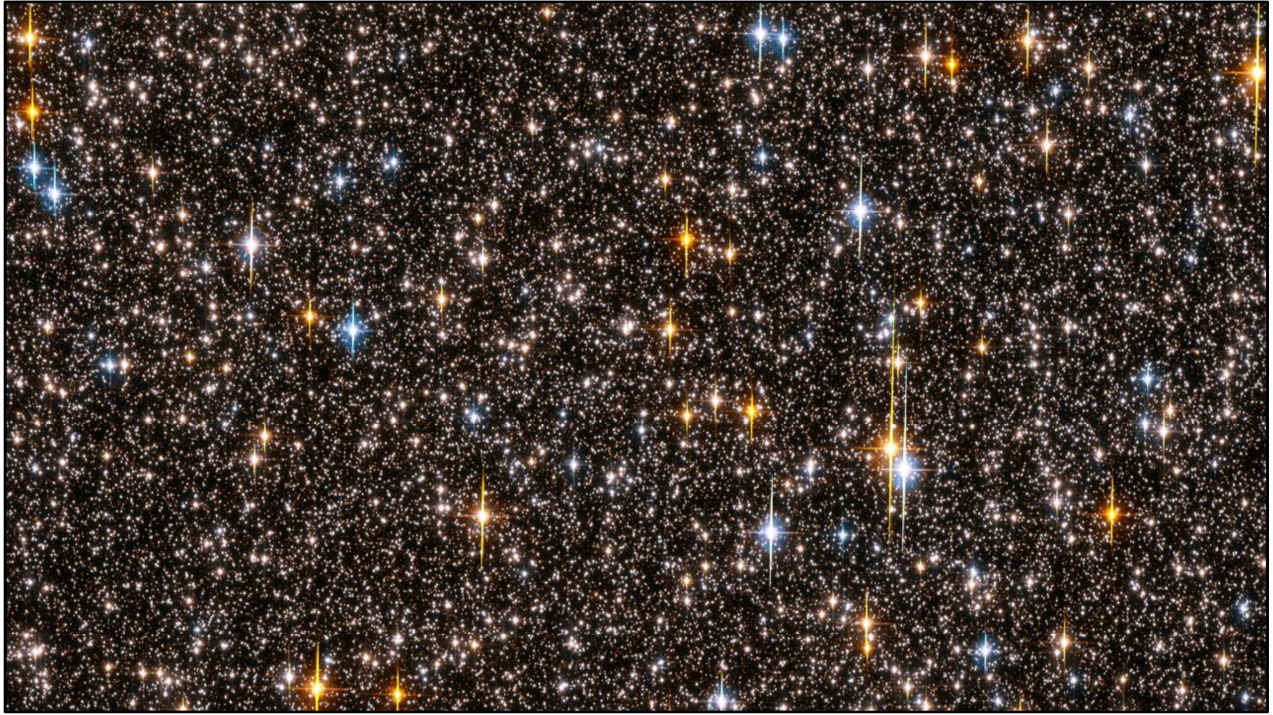
Hebrews 11:1 tells us that *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. Abram, an old childless man with a barren wife was going to have a descendance innumerable like the stars in heaven... lets **see the next two slides to bring perspective**.

When God showed Abram the stars he realized that just as he

could not count the stars he was not able to measure the extent of God's power and blessings. That night, Abram and old man believed God with the faith of a child, My God can and will do this. There also by faith God declared Abram righteous. Faith is the only response from Abram in this entire chapter that God finds acceptable from him.

It is important to observe that Abram's faith is demonstrated in the midst of a question and that God does not answer to his question in detail. We will also see that Abram's questions do not end after He believes in V6. But we learn that at some point true faith in God gives peace to every question.

Genesis 15:6 - is an extremely important verse in Scripture. - read again- Skip 3 slides



This is not what Abram saw but it is just to bring perspective. This is a snapshot from the Hubble Telescope showing what it could capture focused only on one direction. Try to count how many stars you see in your small screen or in your large TV.

1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000

Using mathematical models astronomers have calculated an approximate of 1 billion trillion stars in the observable universe. This is is not someone counting they are just very inaccurate calculations. Return to slide 53

Galatians 3:7

*Therefore know that those who
are of faith are sons of Abraham.*

Genesis 15:6 gives us Abram's pattern of faith.

Abram's pattern of faith is what makes us children of Abram -

Gal 3:7 , This faith in Christ also make us heirs with Abram -

Gal 3:29 next slide.

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

And just like it was the case with Abram, faith in Christ declares us righteous like Abram apart from works - Romans 4:1-6. - next slide

Romans 4:1-5

1 *What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? **2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3** For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." **4** Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. **5** But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness*

Spiritual Lessons

Is V1 only for Abram or for us as well?

How is Christ our exceedingly great reward?

The Sovereign God can answer your questions

Present the lost with an opportunity to believe God dismissing their works or personal contributions

Spiritual lessons

Read V1 - Does God says these words just for Abram or are they meant for us as well?

The short answer is YES, these words for Abram can be applied to us as well. but let's look into this with more detail.

"I am Your shield" means God is our shield. This is a truth expressed in many places in Scripture: For example some months ago our brothers George Samuel and Alexander Kurian reminded us of this truth from Psalm 91.

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

*2I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."*

I liked our brother Alexander Kurian's conclusion: "Except that God in His

love and wisdom allows anything that happen to me for His glory or my own good, no plague will touch me, death will not reach me, nothing will happen to me” Read twice...

We normally encourage the youth with the same thought from Joshua 1:5 5No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you

We are familiar with the promise of the great commission -
Matthew 28

9 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Is this a promise for zero suffering and great prosperity? No, this is not what the Bible teaches

, What about those who suffer some calamity?
Job is the perfect example.

In Job 1:10 Satan complains...

*Have You not made a **hedge** around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.*

In spite of calamity God had his hedge around Job, Satan could only bring as much suffering as God would allow for God’s glory and Job’s blessing.

The rest of the Spiritual Lessons will be addressed next week