

## **GENESIS 15:1-16**

### **WAITING FOR THE PROMISE**

In this lesson God again underscores His covenant promise to Abram. His original promises were given back in Genesis 12:1-3 and in Genesis 13:14-18. So then, this is the third time God appears to and speaks to Abram.

In case you haven't noticed, this man Abram (later renamed Abraham) is big. There's much we can learn about Abraham and his faith in God. In Hebrews Chapter 11, what we know as the "roll call of faith," Abraham is commended for his great faith in 7 verses. Abraham is held up by Paul in Romans Chapter 4 and in Galatians 3:6 as an example of being justified by faith. James uses the example of Abraham in James Chapter 2 to demonstrate how genuine faith is characterized by obedient action. Peter uses Abraham as an example of a godly husband who is respected by his wife (1 Peter 3:6). Jesus mentions Abraham by name in all four gospel accounts (Matthew 8:11, Mark 12:26, Luke 13:28, and John 8:39). Abraham is referred to in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Acts, and 2 Corinthians. He's big!

But as big as Abraham is, GOD IS EVEN BIGGER! I would argue that Abraham is only mentioned because of what God did in his life. If God doesn't deliver on His promises, we would not be talking about Abraham today. The Bible has a lot of different characters in it, some good and some not so good. But the main character throughout is God. This book is HIS story. It's about HIM. So with that in mind, let's read...

READ Genesis 15:1

God knows Abram's concern, which is why He says, "Fear not." You can understand why Abram is concerned. He is 85 years old, still childless, and an elderly wife who is barren. So, God comes to Abram and comforts him. He reminds Abram that He, God, is his Protector and his Provider.

On five different occasions God promises Abram that He will make him and his descendants a "great nation." What is necessary before you can have a nation? I mentioned these before – people, land, and laws.

READ Genesis 15:2-3

Abram in his own reasoning thinks his heir will be his servant Eliezer because Abram does not have children of his own.

READ Genesis 15:4

But God clearly tells Abram, "No, but your heir will come from your own body." Your heir will be your son!

READ Genesis 15:5

God reminds Abram that He is the Creator of the universe. If He can make the stars of the heavens, then certainly He can perform a miracle in Abram's life.

READ Genesis 15:6

"Abram believed God..." He didn't know how or when but he still believed. He didn't have all the answers. At this point all Abram knew is what little God had revealed to him. He knew who, what, where and why. But Abram has no clue how it will happen and when. He knows that somehow, some way, God will bring it to pass.

"God accounted it to, credited it to his account, reckoned it to him as righteousness." In other words, God declares Abram as righteous. How was Abram saved? By faith, by believing what God said. How are we saved? The same way! When this verse is quoted in the New Testament by Paul and by James, the Greek word for righteousness (*dikaioisune*) is closely linked to the Greek word for justify (*dikaiois*). The two words are virtually interchangeable. We can conclude then, that Abram was justified by his faith in God.

READ Genesis 15:7-8

Abram was living in the land, but as yet did not possess it. Other people groups who live there own it. So, Abram asks God about that aspect of His promise to him. God then gives Abram a vision of what is to come.

READ Genesis 15:12-16

God is preparing a nation. He will eventually build up their numbers and get them in the proper mindset to go take possession of the Promised Land. God is giving the pagan idolatrous Canaanite peoples ample opportunity to turn from their wickedness. When they do not (we know that they will not), God will use the Abram's descendants, the Israelites as His instruments of judgment and purge the land. "They will come out with many possessions" (Exodus 12:29-36).

David Padfield in his paper entitled "The Abomination of the Canaanites" states that the future destruction of the Canaanites will not be an attack on innocent people. Rather, it will be God's judgment against abominable sin. Padfield cites this passage here in Genesis Chapter 15 as well as Deuteronomy 7:2-5.

God is building up the numbers of Israelites. Seventy will go into Egypt during the great famine in Joseph's Day. Then, under Moses's leadership, 430 years later, one million strong will come out of Egypt. A mindset of the people will develop over time that desires to possess the land of Canaan. They become tough-minded during their enslavement and mistreatment by the Egyptians. God then uses the mighty Israelite nation as His arm of judgment against the wicked "Amorites," a name synonymous with the Canaanites.

Abram's vision closes with a demonstration of God's presence passing through the pieces of meat in the form of a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch. Where have we heard of smoke and fire before with God? In Exodus 19:16-19. What is this event in conjunction with? It is when God gives Moses the Law on Mount Sinai.

Application: Believe God! He will do what He says He will do whether we understand fully or not.

Faith is simply this – believing God and acting on what He says even when we do not fully understand all the details of His plan.

So, trust God. What other option do we really have?