

Genesis

The Book of Origins

Week 5

We are continuing our study from the book of Genesis

Chapters 13-15 The Flesh vs. The Will of God

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

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

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

This is what we have been doing for the last 4 weeks. Today we are ending our series with chapter 15.

Chapter 15

Review v1-6

Outline

Observations

Spiritual Lessons

This is our agenda for tonight, as usual...

We will begin with a review of last week

We will look at the outline of chapter 15 beginning with v7

We will make some observations - from v7 to 21

We will conclude with some Spiritual Lessons

Review V1-6

V1- Abram's shield and reward

Is V1 only for Abram or for us as well?

How is Christ our exceedingly great reward?

V2-4 Abram's 1st question and the answer from the Sovereign God

The Sovereign God can answer your questions

V5-6 Abram believed The Lord

I recommend glancing down to your Bibles to follow

V1 This chapter begins with God reaching out to Abram with words of assurance and comfort after he had made some enemies in the land when he rescued Lot from a large army and rejected a handsome spoil from the king of Sodom. **Read verse 1.** To protect him, God is not giving Abram a shield, God Himself is the shield. To vindicate his decision after he rejected the spoil from the king of Sodom, God is not giving Abram the kind of reward this world can give, God is the exceedingly great reward. We raised the question if whether this statement from v1 made to Abram was applicable to us.

Last week we learned that God is also our shield. God's care and protection for us is evident throughout Scripture. Psalm 91, Matthew 28:20 - *I am with you always, even to the end of the age, Amen.*, the

account of Joshua, the account of Job, the account of Jehoshaphat we learned about last Sunday, and on and on we can go. God has put a hedge around us. Quoting our brother Alexander Kurian we can agree that “Except that God in His love and wisdom allows anything to 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”.

We also learned God is our exceedingly great reward. Here we left some Spiritual lessons pending.

How is Christ our exceedingly great reward? - After Abram rejected the handsome reward from the king of Sodom, God reminded him that He is his exceedingly great reward. This truth is not just for Abram, it is also for us. God is the reward of any Christian who forfeits this world for the sake of His Son. Many here have rejected in the past or may have to reject in the future gifts of this world out of personal conviction to obey Christ. Rejecting these rewards from the world, that are always full of strings attached, leaves the world perplexed. How can he or she say no to that!? How can he or she give up so much time, money, prestige, advancement.... Even the comfort of having family close by, like Abram did when he left Ur...how can he or she give up so much for Christ!? But we know the truth...In **“giving up so much” after Christ you are not losing anything, you are choosing God as your exceedingly great reward.**

See next slide

Matthew 19:29

“29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”

The Sovereign Lord can answer your questions

Abram's questions reflect humbleness and faith in The Sovereign God and a desire for God's promises. He addressed God as Adonai Yahweh, Sovereign God. In turn, God is patient to listen Abram's questions, gentle in His approach to him, and in this chapter God answered his questions. **It is very important to notice that the answer God gave Abram by asking him to count the stars was sufficient for Abram to understand that God's plans are beyond our ability to fathom. Abram replied with the only valid answer. He replied with faith. A faith that was also induced by God.** God can answer our deepest questions but we must learn from Abram to have an attitude of humbleness and faith, trusting in His Sovereignty and care when we ask.

See two slides ahead...

Here is an example...

James 1:2-8

V5-6 Abram believed The Lord...

This 4 word statement about Abram establishes the only means to receive the Gospel and the foundation that makes us participants in the promises of God. **Abram believed The Lord...**The reason these four words are so important is because what God declared about them. "*Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord credited it as righteousness to him.*" If you know you are not righteous but a sinner like me and the best of us God wants you to know today that this pattern of faith from Abram is your only hope to be right with God. In this chapter we observe how Abram had zero merits or participation in this declaration of righteousness. God credited Abram with righteousness because Abram believed the Lord. See 3 slides ahead

Matthew 19:29

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”

Return to previous slide after reading

James 1:2-8

2 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. **4** But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. **5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. **6** But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. **7** For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; **8** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

Illustration, many times my kids have questions for me when something is difficult but their questions not always have the same attitude or intention. Sometimes they approach me with respect and trust and other times they don't. When they don't their questions sound more like a complaint - why can't I have a phone? Y I am better of not answering that. But sometimes they approach with respect and trust. I am thankful you care for me, I would like to be wiser and learn more about why this is not the best time to have a phone. That is a question I can answer.

Notice Abram approached God with reverence and trust in Him. God can answer your easy and most difficult questions and give you wisdom without reproach if you trust in Him when you ask.

Go back to slide 62

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

Read these verses we read last week once again carefully. Notice that the only way you can be declared righteous before God is by believing Christ. If you have not believed, I beg you to trust Him today as your only Savior and God who died at the cross and resurrected to pay for your sin and give you the only declaration that gives you a righteous standing before God.

Chapter 15

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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 answers with object lessons, a prophecy, and an unconditional covenant

V18-21 God concludes this word to Abram with a deed of the land

We will begin reading from V7

V7 After what appears to be an interruption from Abram on V2-3, God continues speaking adding to what he said in V1. **Read 1 and 7**

In 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 In response, God asks him to bring a set of 5 clean animals to perform a covenant ceremony. **read**

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 God highlights how incapable Abram was from truly handling the answer to his question or having any control over the future. God

responds in a prophecy to show Abram that He is the only one who controls the future - we will **read** v12-16 in a few minutes

Finally in V17 - we see Abram exhausted and unable to make a bilateral agreement with God - God passes through the animals by himself. **read 17** All these inabilities of Abram highlight that only God had the ability to deliver a perfect covenant by Himself. Abram's only participation here is to receive this covenant by faith.

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. **read 18-21**

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Observations V7-21

V7 - God reminds Abram He brought him there with a purpose

V8- Abram asks a second question

V9-14 God answers Abram with truth that is difficult

V15-16 God explains to Abram his immediate and long term purpose

V17 - God alone consummated the covenant

V18-21 God explains the covenant of the land

V7 read- In case Abram was to worry, God reminds Him He is the one who called him from Ur of the Chaldeans. Remember where I found you and how far I have brought you! When we worry, this is important to remember. Remember where God has found you and how far He has brought you!

V8- read -

Since Abram wants to be sure he will possess the land God is ready to cement his security with a covenant. God does not need covenants to remind him to be faithful, He gives them to remind us He is faithful. This is a great covenant, except Abram will not be able to meet its demands and will not be invited in the end to put his signature under God's... In V10 to 17 we see an object lesson to Abram of his inability to sign a covenant with God , a prophecy for Israel, and a unilateral and unconditional covenant consummated by God alone.

So in V8 Abram makes a second question once again addressing the Sovereign Lord. But the object lesson God chooses to answer Abram's second question

is not pleasant as the first when he asked him to count the stars. **This second answer is a prophecy to Abram and Israel. Abram wants to know the fulfilment of his descendants and their claim of the land of Canaan. God will show Abram and his descendants, the Israelites who would follow, a prophecy of what the consummation of their nation would involve:**

In V9-10 Service to God - finding the animals and cutting the animals - V9-10 **read** - Israel was involved in this type of service until Christ died

V11 - Conflict and frustration - Having to deal with birds of prey - V11 **read** for Israel having to deal with enemies

V12a Personal Incapacity - Abram fell asleep out of exhaustion - When Abram falls asleep, God is the only one still awake. V12a **read** - This is an object lesson that Israel also would not be able to do what God had planned for them on their own.

V12b Terror - Abram experienced extreme fear - V12b **read** - Israel would also experience situations of extreme fear

V13 Alienation, oppression, and a long waiting period - V13 **read** - Israel experienced all these things in Egypt in the book of Exodus

V14 - Judgment of nations and ultimate prosperity - V14 **read** - God will use Israel to bring judgment and God will ultimately bless them

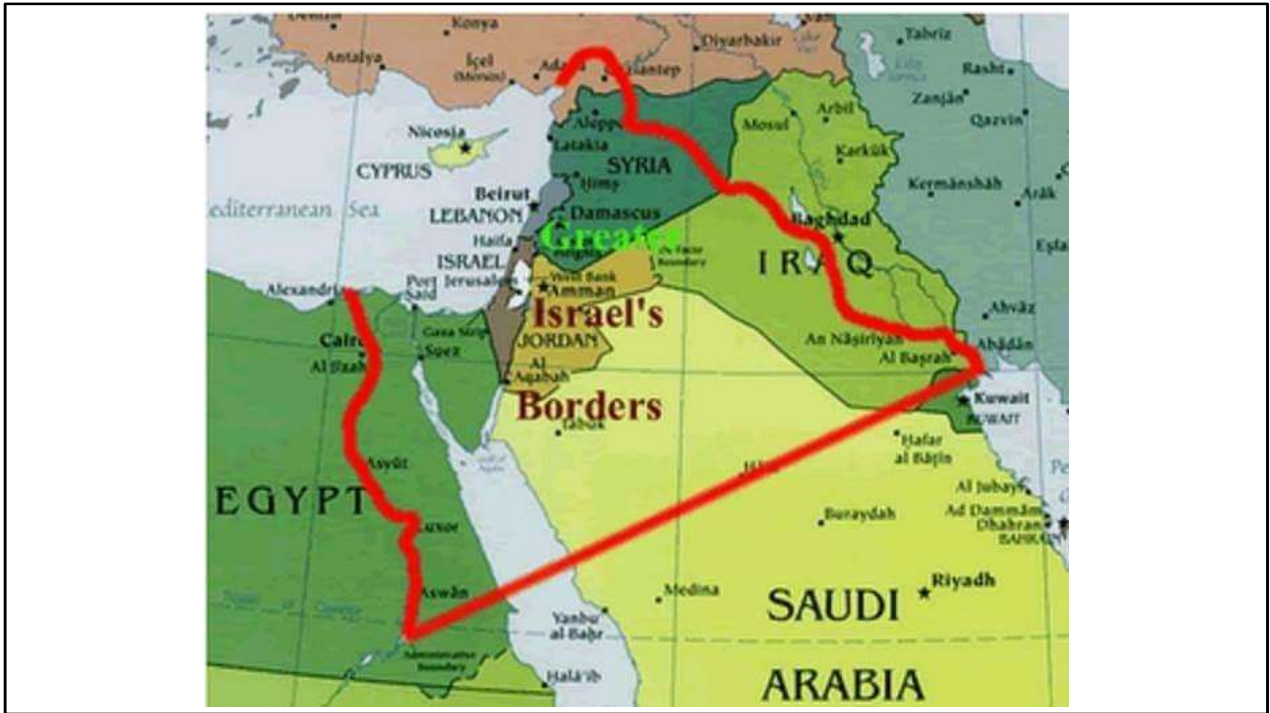
As Christians we can also identify with these experiences in our pilgrimage with God. Service, conflict, self incapacity, terror, alienation, persecution, etc... these are common experiences for us as Christians. But just like God showed Abram how everything was in his hands He wants us to know that the difficulties we experience in our pilgrimage are also a part of His Sovereign plan, they are meant for His glory and He will bring them to pass.

In V15 and 16 - God concludes this prophecy. These concluding words are meant to bring Abram assurance and to lead him to see his mortal limitations in contrast with with God's long reaching and greater purposes. **In other words this is meant to make Abram understand his place. read verses.**

V17 is most significant - - **You may know this already, but this covenant ceremonies were typical in the days of Abram. This was the way severe contracts were signed. Some would cut donkeys or dogs and the two parties would pass in between to signify that whoever broke the covenant would deserve to die like those animals. God in this case chooses clean animals not donkeys or dogs and passed through the midst of the animals by Himself,**

and Abram was not invited to follow. This is proof that this is an unconditional covenant that God was going to bring to pass on His own.

V18-20 See next slide



Let's read these last two verses - V18-20 - This is a conservative map of the area that was promised to Abram. Other maps go all the way up to Turkey claiming the Hittite empire mentioned in V20 extended all the way to this area SEE NEXT MAP.



The point is not to argue about which map is right, the obvious observation is that the land has not been fully claimed and the promise to Abram secured by God's covenant is still pending. This keeps alive many prophecies about the future plans of God for this earth. FURTHERMORE, beyond this map the reign of Christ will be over all the earth and for eternity in heaven

Spiritual Lessons

The test of waiting

Birds of prey

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

The test of waiting

This chapter begins one of the most difficult trials for Abraham. After seeing God's might in battle, care for him in his life in Egypt and Canaan, having heard the voice of God multiple times. The test is now to wait and trust God will do what He promised in His way and in His time. The temptation from this test is evident in this chapter and the next: Abram will try to fulfill God's promise in the power of the flesh. Is it possible to get this wrong? After all Abraham is looking for is to get God's promise. But God's promises must come in God's way and in God's time. The waiting test is hard. The important question is not when will it happen but how would I bring glory to God until it happens.

Let's make a connection here. We are waiting in the Lord for His return. While we wait the minutes seem slow and the promise distant. The

temptation is to try to live life and seek the rest of heaven on this earth through wealth, pleasures, and comfort. Nothing wrong with wealth, pleasures, and comfort when they come from God but they should not become a replacement of heaven or the goal of our lives. The goal of our life is Christ. This means we should wait for the promises of God in fellowship, service, and devotion to Him. However, like Abram's anxiety to fast forward the promises, there is always a temptation for us to fast forward heaven to this earth in our own terms. And just like Abram suffered consequences later in the case of Hagar the consequences of our impatience can bring long term consequences to us as well.

Birds of prey

We can imagine Abram's frustration when the birds of prey attacked the animals he was preparing for the covenant - read v11. The reality is that this birds of prey represent in a real way the fact that the work of God always experiences opposition. Many of you have prayed for this study, and I thank God for your prayers. The opposition is always there, the distractions are always present, the birds of prey always seek to disturb the work of God. But in this section we see God, not Abram, overcame the birds of prey. Many times I feel discouraged because I feel the opposition to the work of God takes a toll on His servants and His service but I am encouraged to know that God will complete His purpose, even in the midst of opposition.

Believe Christ without a contribution

Present an opportunity to believe in God dismissing works or personal contributions - This is the pattern of faith of Abram, God presented Abram the opportunity to believe when he asked him to count the stars and at in the same chapter he rejected his ideas to reach God's promise, he rejected his works to prepare the covenant, and rejected Abrams participation in His unconditional covenant. In the same way when we present the Gospel we have to offer the opportunity to believe

in Christ as the only Savior who can only be received by faith apart from our contributions.

What is the significance of the Abrahamic covenant?

An unconditional covenant fundamental to:

- A. The promise of The Messiah
- B. Understanding of prophecy
- C. The preservation of Israel
- D. Our salvation as Gentiles
- E. Israel's claim to the land
- F. The offer of unconditional grace

This is an amazing covenant!

The unconditional character of this covenant that begins with Abraham in Genesis 12 is very important. As Abram responds in faith leaving his country, family and father's household God delivers everything in the covenant without conditions.

This covenant is foundational to the way in which God deals with us as heirs of the promises made to Abraham. Here we see the unchangeable character of God. We will review this covenant again in chapter 15.

- A) Zechariah quotes from this covenant
- B) The promises made in this covenant are literal and unconditional
- C) In chapter 15 we will see more about God's plans to establish Israel as His nation

- A) Our salvation as gentiles comes as a provision in this covenant - All the nations will be blessed by Abram
- B) Israel has the cleanest, and clearest, guaranteed deed of property over the land of Israel through this covenant
- C) God's covenant with Abraham was an act of unconditional grace. He could not hold on to this covenant or make any claims on it by his merits. The New Testament refers to this covenant as the basis by which God would establish the new covenant by faith alone like the pattern of Abraham.