

# GENESIS

## Lesson 28 w/ Answers

## The Lord's Covenant with Abram - Genesis 15

*"<sup>1</sup> After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.'<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, 'Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?'<sup>3</sup> And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.'<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.'<sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.<sup>7</sup> He also said to him, 'I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.'<sup>8</sup> But Abram said, 'Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?'<sup>9</sup> 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.'<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.<sup>12</sup> As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to him, 'Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.<sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.<sup>15</sup> You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.<sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.'<sup>17</sup> When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.<sup>18</sup> On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—<sup>19</sup> the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,<sup>20</sup> Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,<sup>21</sup> Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.'" [NIV]*

In this lesson, we study a passage in the Bible that most folks who read the Bible are very familiar with: God's covenant with Abram, and the contract God established with Abram. Before we look at our text, let's first consider that from the time God led Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees (see Genesis 15:7 and Nehemiah 9:7), he made several promises along the way.

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### ***To get started, let's examine the promises that God has already made to Abram.***

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1. Look up the following verses and note the specific promise(s) that God made to Abram; also note where he made them.
  - a. Genesis 12:2-4
    - i. ANSWER: At Haran, God promised to make Abram "into a great nation" and to bless Abram and "make your name great." God also tells Abram that "all the people on earth will be blessed through you."
  - b. Genesis 12:6-7
    - i. ANSWER: In Canaan, God promised to "give this land" to his descendants.
  - c. Genesis 13:3-4,14-17
    - i. ANSWER: At Bethel, God promised that "all the land you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." And, "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth."
2. And now consider the promises and the contract God made with Abram at Mamre.
  - a. Genesis 15:4-5
    - i. ANSWER: At Mamre, God promised Abram that a son, "who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." He also told Abram to "look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them...so shall your offspring be."
  - b. Genesis 15:18-20
    - i. ANSWER: Also at Mamre, God made a specific geographic promise to Abram and his descendants, i.e., that He would give them the following lands: "from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites." And he made a contract with Abram.

3. Now let's consider what was different about the promises God made with Abram before Abram actually separated from his family, his nephew Lot, (Genesis 12:2,3, and 7) with the promises that occur in Genesis 13:5-13, 15:4-5 and 18-20, after it was just Abram without Lot. What do we see?
  - a. ANSWER 1: We note that God's promises, and His contract with Abram, are more detailed and more specific—details that Lot would have been unaware of. Clearly, Lot knew that Abram and God had a very close relationship, and that God was going to bless Abram by making "his name great," and that he would "give this land" to his offspring. But that would have been all Lot would have known about the promises that God made his uncle, if he even knew that.
  - b. ANSWER 2: It was only after Lot had departed towards Sodom that God provides more specific details about his blessing of Abram. We learn that God promises Abram a "son who is your own flesh and blood," that his offspring would be like the stars which cannot be counted. Furthermore, in Genesis 15:18-21, God spells out the exact geography that defined the land that He would give him. Again, Lot would have been unaware of these promises, nor would he have been aware of the contract that God made with Abram.
4. When God promised Abram/Abraham that "all the people on earth will be blessed through you," can we see in this as a reference to Jesus and the Gospel bringing that blessing to the whole world, Since Jesus was a descendant of Abram? What do the following verses tell us?
  - a. Galatians 3:7-9
    - i. ANSWER: Those who place their faith in Jesus are children of Abraham.
  - b. Galatians 3:14
    - i. ANSWER: Jesus "redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus."
  - c. Galatians 3:29
    - i. ANSWER: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
  - d. Genesis 22:18
    - i. ANSWER: God repeats this promise to Abraham after Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac: "And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you obeyed me."
  - e. Genesis 26:4
    - i. ANSWER: God reaffirms this promise to Isaac, Abraham's son: "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."
  - f. Genesis 28:14
    - i. ANSWER: God also reaffirms this promise to Isaac's son, Jacob: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

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God's exclusive promise is important to note as it again tells us that there is no other way to be saved except through Jesus. Per John 14:6: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" Other religions and belief systems will try to convince many that there is more than one way to heaven, but Abraham's blessing is only available to those who believe in the Messiah, Jesus the Christ—and none other.

Hearing God's promises, Abram asks (referring to the land God has promised him), "how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" God's response may seem strange, but it reflected exactly how serious contracts were set between parties during this time. As you can see from the text, a heifer, goat, and ram are split in two and when the sun had set and it was dark, an unusual thing occurred: "A smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces." The text goes on to tell us that "on that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'to your descendants I give this land...'"

The Middle Bronze Age custom of establishing a lasting contract between parties was to split the carcasses, and each party making the covenant would pass through the pieces, symbolizing that if either of them violated, or did not live up to the covenant, they faced certain death as a result. Here, we see a unilateral covenant as God is walking through the pieces, making this an everlasting covenant. The Promised Land belongs to Abram's descendants.

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*Related to the above, respond to the following questions.*

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5. How do we know this is God walking through the pieces? Note what the following scriptures tell us about God manifesting Himself as smoke and fire?
- a. Exodus 3:2
    - i. ANSWER: God appears to Moses as a burning bush.
  - b. Exodus 13:21
    - i. ANSWER: God leads the Israelites as a pillar of smoke during the day and a pillar of fire by night.
  - c. Exodus 14:24
    - i. ANSWER: God uses the pillar of fire and cloud to protect the Israelites against the Egyptian army.
  - d. Exodus 19:18
    - i. ANSWER: God descends Mount Sinai as smoke and fire.
  - e. Deuteronomy 4:36
    - i. ANSWER: God speaks out of the fire.
  - f. Deuteronomy 5:22
    - i. ANSWER: God speaks from out of the fire and creates the two tablets, i.e., the Ten Commandments.
  - g. Isaiah 66:15
    - i. ANSWER: The LORD is, "coming with fire,"..."and his rebuke with flames of fire."
  - h. Daniel 7:9
    - i. ANSWER: God's throne is a "flaming fire."
6. Just before God walks through the sacrificial pieces, he tells Abram a prophecy. What was it? (See Genesis 15:13-14 and 16.)
- a. ANSWER: This passage recounts God's prophecy about his chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, their travel to and bondage in Egypt, and their ultimate return to the land that God promised Abraham.

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There is a hymn entitled "Blessed Assurance" that fills us with hope and the assurance that Jesus is truly our promised savior, and that through him we have eternal life. God's messaging in this lesson would have been a blessed assurance to Abram. He asked the question, "How can I know?" Today, we ask the same question: how can I know that I am saved?

The Bible tells us that God has paid the ultimate price for us, sacrificing his only son to die on the cross for our sins. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we know that he is our salvation. John writes in 1 John 5:13: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life." (Emphasis mine.)

As we close this lesson, rest assured that God is on His sovereign throne. His only son Jesus has paid the price for our salvation and through His Holy Word **we know that we have eternal life.**

Have a blessed week, rejoicing with me as we study God's Word and are reassured of our heavenly home living with Christ Jesus.

In Christ,

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