

Bibles??

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

So last week, we started to see the missteps of Abram's nephew, Lot, as he chose to pitch his tent near Sodom – and because of this decision, he was caught up in a battle between a few of the kings in the area.

It was Abram that came to the rescue with 300+ of his own servants and they proceeded to rescue Lot.

This evening, we are going to continue our study through the book of Genesis as we will start to see Abram's faith tested again and again.

Let's pray...

[Gen 15:1-21 NKJV] 1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I [am] your shield, your exceedingly great reward." 2 But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house [is] Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" 4 And behold, the word of the LORD [came] to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your

heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. 7 Then He said to him, "I [am] the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." 8 And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror [and] great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land [that is] not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 "But in the fourth generation they shall return here,

for the iniquity of the Amorites [is] not yet complete." 17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates-- 19 "the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 "the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 "the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

The chapter begins with the words - after these things, After these things refers to the Abram's rescue efforts of Lot as well as Abram's encounter with Melchizedek and the King of Sodom.

Last week we spent over time discussing how Melchizedek appearance in chapter 14 is a manifestation of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and the King of Sodom, a picture of the Antichrist/Satan.

At the end of the chapter, Abram demonstrates his allegiance toward the King of Salem – Melchizedek as he brings tithes to Him and yet he refuses

to take up the King of Sodom on his offer. Remember, the King of Sodom offered him the bounty in return for men/souls.

So, after his military victory and more importantly, spiritual victory – Abram begins to deal with fear.

In each and everyone one of our lives, after we have a tremendous spiritual victory, we must guard ourselves against the challenges that will occur after a victory because this is usually where we let our guard down.

This is when we become the most vulnerable to attacks by the enemy.

This is when doubt comes into play.

Every year that I go to the Men's Conference, usually at the end of the conference – there is always a prayer for protection and guidance and wisdom because what happens, as soon as we come down from that mountain – the place where we just experienced a tremendous victory, the enemy is ready to attack with doubt, temptation and with trials.

In the scriptures, it happened to our Lord and Savior, He was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist, He heard the words from Heaven saying, "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And then we find out that

Jesus was driven into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, to wrestle against the enemy for forty days.

It also happened to Peter multiple times, turn with me to Matt:16

[Mat 16:13-18, 20-23 NKJV] 13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" 14 So they said, "Some [say] John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed [this] to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ...

In verse 16, we see Peter's spiritual victory. Peter understood that Jesus was not only God's Messiah, but also God Himself.

Jesus points out that Peter had actually been receiving a revelation from God Himself.

20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. 21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. 22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

In five short verses, Peter went from Jesus pronouncing a blessing upon him to Jesus rebuking him and calling him Satan.

Back to Genesis 15

So Abram is fearful and God sees his heart and He gives Abram a vision and in the vision he says, "Do not be afraid, Abram. **I [am] your shield**, your **exceedingly great reward.**"

After Abram had defeated the kings and rescued Lot, we was probably thinking that these kings would be back to retaliate against him with a much bigger army that would easily defeat him and his 300+ servants that fought with him.

Now, notice the two words that God uses here,

God says, I am your shield.

The Ancient Spartans were famous for the many battles that they fought. From a very young age, the males were trained and groomed on being proficient in combat.

They carried a sword, yet they were not known for their sword –

The Ancient Spartan soldiers were known for their shields.

You see, the shield protects the heart! And one of the things that made the Spartan soldiers so effective in battle is the way that they utilized their shield.

Not only were they able to protect themselves with their shield – but they protected each other as they would form a protective shield to protect them from their enemy's spears and arrows.

When the young Spartan would go into battle, it has been said that as the mother would see her son leave to battle, she would say to him, “Come back with your shield or come back on it.”

You see, it was shameful for a Spartan to return from battle without their shield.

What is the point of this illustration?

God is our shield. As long as we hold on to Him, He protects our hearts from those things that can hinder our walk and cause us to stumble – like bitterness, envy, jealousy and sin.

It doesn't matter what can come against us, if He is for us, nothing can be against us. Amen.

[Pro 30:5 NKJV] 5 Every word of God [is] pure; He [is] a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

The second thing the Lord tells Abram is that I am your exceedingly great reward.

Remember, Abram came home empty handed from the battle with the kings yet God reminds Abram that He is a much greater reward than anything that he would have received from the battle.

God will satisfy our needs, not by asking for material things. God will satisfy our needs when we draw close to Him and realize that He is really all that we need. He is our great reward.

In verse two, Abram is struggling on how things are going to work out.

He knows that God has made a promise to him about his descendants – yet he also understands that he is getting older now and so is Sarai. He is

approaching 90 and Sarai is almost 80 and yet they still do not have any descendants.

So Abram asks if his servant Eliezer is going to be the heir that God promised him and God told him no.

And God once again reminds Abram that the descendent will come from him.

And he takes him outside and shows him the stars – and God says to Abram, count the stars and that is how many descendants you are going to have.

Now two chapters ago, God told Abram that his descendants would number the dust of the earth.

So God keeps on reminding Abram of His promise.

Now, I am going to reread verse 6 again because it is a very important verse.

6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness

This verse is so important because it is a picture of our salvation.

We need to remember that God made this promise to Abram out of grace – Abram wasn't righteous. Abram responded by faith as he believes what

God is telling him and as a result of grace by faith, God accounted Abram righteous.

The Hebrew word for righteous means “rightly clothed”

Back when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, you remember they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. But then God sacrificed an animal to cover them.

It was God who sacrificed His Son on the cross so that we can also be “rightly clothed”

We are righteous not in what we do but in what He did for us on the cross.

In verse 7, despite that God had reminded Abram about the promise once again, Abram wants proof and because the Lord is merciful and graceful, He pretty much says, you want proof, I will give you proof.

Now back then, they didn't use contracts – what we have in the next few verses is essentially a contract.

God makes Abram collect the different animals and cut them in half and what would happen is that both of the parties that are entering the contract would walk among the carcasses as a way of demonstrating their seriousness in keeping their end of the bargain.

Abram falls asleep after he cuts up the animals and in his sleep speaks to Abram.

13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land [that is] not theirs , and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 "But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites [is] not yet complete."

Here God is telling Abram that his descendants will have to go down to Egypt – we will see this at the end of the book of Genesis in the time of Joseph and there they will be enslaved for 400 years before God raises Moses to deliver them.

In verse 16, God pronounces judgment on the Amorites that lived in Canaan during this time.

God will give them 400 years to repent from their wickedness and then God will use Abram's descendants to bring judgment upon the Amorites and we see this during the time of Joshua.

And then in verse 17 – we have God signing the covenant.

17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

The covenant or the contract was a one sided contract. God is the only one who signed it as He was the one that walked between the carcasses. Abram didn't.

There was nothing that Abram had to do on his part – it was all God's.

Let's go to chapter 16...

One of the things that we must always consider when God gives a promise, there is often a gap between the giving of the promise and the fulfillment of the promise.

Why is there a waiting period?

Is God having a hard time keeping His end of the promise? After all, Abram and Sarai are getting pretty old now.

The answer of course is no,

The reason that there are gaps or delays is that through them God prepares us in the arena of faith. This is where our faith is exercised.

So here in chapter 16, we will see how Abram and Sarai respond to these delays.

[Gen 16:1-16 NKJV] 1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no [children]. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing [children]. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong [be] upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me." 6 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid [is] in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. 7 Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from the

presence of my mistress Sarai." 9 The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." 10 Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." 11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you [are] with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild man; His hand [shall be] against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." 13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" 14 Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, [it is] between Kadesh and Bered. 15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram [was] eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

This is what happens when we don't wait upon the Lord – we think we are helping God out yet, what happens is that we simply make bigger problems for ourselves.

And this happens all the time.

After 10 years of waiting upon the promises of God – they take it upon themselves to fulfill the promise of God.

Anyone here ever heard of the phrase “God helps those who help themselves?”

God helps those who help themselves??

Do you guys know what bible verse that is?

The thing is – that is not a bible verse at all – that is a phrase spoken by Benjamin Franklin.

God only commands us to trust Him and be obedient to His word. That is it.

Everything we do, we are to seek Him first.

Yet, our flesh and our pride cause us to take action first –

This is very common when single believers pray for a husband or a wife – initially, their prayers is that God will chose for them that special someone. after a few months or years of waiting upon the Lord, some people decide that they are going to take it upon themselves and help out God.

They go to the local bar – meet someone, fall in love, they get married, they find out that they are unequally yoked and have a miserable marriage.

First of all, if you are praying for a spouse, I am pretty sure the last place you are going to find the person that God has picked out for you – will be at the local bar.

But, that is what we do – we look for answers from the world instead of from God.

The biggest problem in this chapter is that Abram never seeks the council of the Lord. When Sarai offers her servant to him, he should have asked God if this was His will first.

What Sarai did, by giving her maidservant to Abram was customary during this time. However, just because the world condones something – it doesn't make it ok.

Abram violated the institution of marriage that God had set up back in creation.

Just because God allowed it to happen doesn't mean that He condoned it.

We will see the consequences of this sin throughout the Old Testament.

Think about the consequences of this one act and the repercussions still felt today by this one decision. The entire Middle East conflict as a result of a decision that was made 4000 years ago.

Both Abram and Sarai also see the consequences as once Hagar conceives, it appears that Hagar rubs it in the face of Sarai – and Sarai has had enough so she takes it out on Hagar and Hagar flees.

Now let's look at verse 7 again,

7 Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

This is the first time in scriptures where we see the phrase, the Angel of the Lord – and when we see the Angel of the Lord, it is a manifestation of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

He didn't first appear to Noah or Enoch or Abram. The Angel of the LORD first appeared to a single mother-to-be who had a pride problem and was mistreated by the woman whose decision helped create this entire mess.

The Angel of the Lord tells Hagar to return to Abram and Sarai because He was going to multiply his descendants – and we see that she is obedient.

One last verse,

13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”

I find it interesting because Hagar had not been looking for God, she hadn't seen God or found God – it was God who saw Hagar. It was God who comforted Hagar. It was God who initiated the contact with Hagar.

Hagar returns home to Abram and Sarai and she gives birth to Ishmael. However, the hurt feelings toward each other will continue.

One of the biggest consequences in this lapse of faith is that Abram will have to wait another 13 years before the word of God comes to him once more.

This is what happens when we have these lapses of faith, we still have to endure the consequences.

God was exercising Abram's faith – it was a test and Abram failed it.

Now, Abram has to retake the test. He had already waited 10 years – now, he will have to wait another 13 years.

May we seek the Lord in all of our decisions and may we learn to trust Him and be obedient to His word. Amen.

Let's pray...