

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Genesis 15:1-21

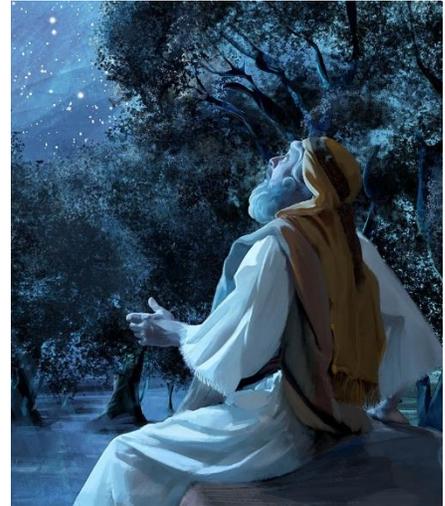
God Blesses Abram

God again speaks to Abram, this time in a vision. The Lord assures him, "I am a benefactor to you: your reward will be exceedingly great." Abram responds by asking what reward God could bestow that mattered, having no child to inherit. As a childless man, at his death Abram's inheritance will belong to a steward, Eliezer of Damascus.

Recognizing the deep anguish of Abram's soul, the Lord answers with a message of great hope and encouragement. God declares that Abram's heir will definitely not be Eliezer of Damascus. His heir will be a child of his own blood, engendered from his own body. The Lord makes a similar promise in 2 Sam. 7:12: "*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.*" What God does next reveals that his plan extends far beyond who would inherit the household.

The Lord summons Abram outside his tent. God then declares that trying to count his offspring will be just as difficult as numbering the stars. Gazing at the expanse above, Abram trusts in the Lord's word. In response he is credited with righteousness, a term signifying a final settlement.

The Lord speaks again to promise Abram the land, who again questions God. We recall a similar question in Luke 1:18. The Lord then calls for three three-year old animals and two birds. Abram kills them, the three animals being divided in halves. God then causes him to fall into a deep sleep, telling Abram for certain that his descendants will be slaves in "*a country not their own.*" But the Lord promises to judge the nation that country enslaved them, and they would leave with abundant property, as Abram himself had done when he left Egypt in Chapter 12.



As for Abram, God promises his life will end in contentment and peace. Speaking of his descendants, the Lord assures Abram they will return to the Promised Land after four spans (centuries) of time. The term *Amorites* refers to the current inhabitants. Judgement will fall when the weight of their sin, "*the peoples of the lands with their abominations*" [Ez. 9:1], becomes such that God can no longer bear it.

Flame alerts us to God's presence, like fire and smoke on Sinai. To seal the covenant, God himself passes through the divided parts, as Abram's descendants do by walking through the Red Sea when it parted. God Almighty solemnly assures Abram that his descendants will inherit the land between Egypt and the Euphrates River. His words are, "I have promised." Ten nations named in verses 19-21 then occupying Canaan will be dispossessed and driven out. Abram is only a witness to this awesome event.

The author of Hebrews spoke of this event when he wrote, "*For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, 'Surely I will bless you and multiply you.' And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.*" [Heb. 6:13-15]

By making this covenant, the Almighty imposes an obligation on himself with no conditions on Abram, who places his trust and faith entirely in God. As the Apostle writes, "*Against all hope Abraham in hope believed . . . without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.'*" [Rom. 4:18-22]