



The Covenant Confirmed Genesis 14-16

Introduction

Last week we saw that the beginning of the Patriarchal Period was a very challenging time for Abram and his faith. From a pagan land, Ur of the Chaldeans, God called him into service, told him to move from place to place, and gave him a remarkable covenant promise. Abram's wife, Sarai was barren, he faced danger of losing his life in Egypt and was separated from his anticipated heir, Lot. In the face of all of these circumstances and setbacks, God continued to encourage Abram with promises concerning his descendants.

OUTLINE of GENESIS 14-16

I. Rescue of Lot - Genesis 14:1-16

II Royal Banquet - Genesis 14:17-24

III. Ratified Covenant - Genesis 15:1-21

IV. Ungodly Plan - Genesis 16:1-6

V. Hagar's Turn Around - Genesis 16:7-16

I. Rescue of Lot - Genesis 14:1-16

A. Coalition of Kings - Genesis 14:1-7

Warring between people groups was quite common in Abram's day. After several different battles and rebellions, a strong coalition of four kings evolved under Chedorlaomer and invaded Canaan. Their objective probably was to keep the trade routes to Egypt open.

B. Capture of Lot - Genesis 14:8-12.

Chedorlaomer, with three other kings, attacked five kings in the Valley of Siddim, including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. Chedorlaomer's armies were victorious. They looted Sodom and Gomorrah and took Lot prisoner with all his possessions.

C. Abram's Heroic Rescue - Genesis 14:13-16

Abram was told of Lot's capture and immediately pulled his militia of 318 men together. These were home-trained servants, born and raised as a protective force for Abram's family and possessions. Going into battle against an overwhelmingly superior alliance of four armies, Abram strategically divided his forces and made a surprise night attack on them. He pursued the enemy for over 150 miles and by God's grace rescued Lot, all the people who were with him and all their possessions. Abram displayed profound trust that God

would give him total victory over these ungodly forces and their overpowering superiority in numbers.

II. Royal Banquet - Genesis 14:17-24

A. Servants of God Most High - Genesis 14:17-20.

The King of Sodom deferred to Melchizedek, the first priest mentioned in the Bible. Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness". His spiritual title - priest of God Most High - indicates that he worshiped God as the possessor of heaven and earth - the sovereign power over the universe. Melchizedek gave a royal banquet to honor God and Abram's great victory. He served bread and wine and blessed Abram as an instrument designed for the glory of God. He also blessed God for full credit in giving Abram this great victory. Both Melchizedek and Abram are noted as servants of God Most High - the sovereign possessor of heaven and earth.

B. Who Was Melchizedek? - Hebrews 7:1-21

Melchizedek had no father or mother and no genealogy. He was made "*like the son of God*" without "*beginning of days nor end of life*". Most commentators believe Melchizedek was a type of Christ because, like Christ, he was a king of righteousness, a king of peace and a priest forever.

C. Refusal of Bera's Request - Genesis 14:21-24

As the banquet concluded, the King of Sodom, Bera, (14:2) requested Abram to return his people to him, but to keep all the gold, silver, weapons and cattle for himself. Abram refused the proposal, not wanting to be obligated to this ungodly man in any way. Abram apparently knew that the King of Sodom was a materialistic idolater who allowed wicked, immoral behavior among his people. Furthermore, Abram desired to prosper only because of God's blessings. He did not want to give the king an opportunity to distort the facts and claim that he, rather than God, had made Abram rich.

III. Ratified Covenant - Genesis 15:1-21

A. Abram's Fears - Genesis 15:1

Wars of retaliation by defeated kings were a plague in that region. The fear of retaliation by the four powerful

kings plus his need of an heir caused Abram to be afraid. At this time, God appeared to him in a vision with the reminder that He had been Abram's "*shield*" in the recent battle, and the promise to be Abram's "*exceedingly great reward*" in the future.

B. Abram's Justification - Genesis 15:2-6.

Abram reminded God he had no heir since he was childless and Lot had not returned with him. Abram assumed that God meant for his chief servant, Eliezer, to be his heir. But God told him that (1) Abram's heir would come from his own body and (2) Abram's descendants (who had faith in God) would number more than the stars in the heavens.

This brings us to one of the most important verses in the Bible: "*And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*". This means that God justified Abram on the basis of his faith and righteousness. Justification is the first of three phases to ultimate salvation – justification, sanctification and glorification.

It is noteworthy that Genesis 15:6 is the foundational truth of the doctrine of justification by faith, not by works. It is repeated three times in the New Testament to show that God credits His righteousness to us by faith alone. See Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23.

C. Meaning of Justification

In the Old Testament, "justification" meant the judgmental act of God in which He declared the believer righteous on the basis of his genuine acknowledgment and acceptance of the truth and righteousness of God. Later, in New Testament times, the equivalent meaning for "justification" became the judicial act of God in which He declares the believer righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. In both Testaments, it is a judicial pronouncement by God stemming from a response to His calling of surrender, love and obedience.

As "born again" Christians, we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and our future position is in heaven (Ephesians 2:5-7). This is justification, the first phase of salvation. The second phase, sanctification, is a lifetime of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The third phase of salvation, glorification, happens at physical death when we are finally and completely saved.

Application

Along with righteous Abram, have you "*believed in the Lord*"? If so, it has been accounted to you for

righteousness (Genesis 15:6), meaning that you have been declared righteous in God's sight. There is no law you must follow or work you must do to obtain this righteousness. Furthermore, as you put your trust in God, believing in Him, He will begin, carry out, and complete the process of sanctification in your life and bring you to glory.

D. How the Covenant Was Made - Genesis 15:7-11

Abram asked God for a supernatural verification of His promise. God responded by making a covenant with Abram after the fashion of covenants made in those days. This involved the two parties splitting animals and birds in half and walking between the divided parts to validate the covenant. Abram brought a heifer, goat, ram, turtledove and pigeon to God. Each of these animals, which God required, was later listed among the acceptable sacrifices under the Law of Moses. Abram cut the animals in two and placed them in two rows opposite each other.

E. Abram's Unsettling Vision - Genesis 15:12-16

Abram fell into a deep sleep and at this time received God's revelation of the persecution and suffering his descendants must endure for four hundred years in a land that was not theirs (Egypt). They would return to the land of Canaan with great possessions after the "*iniquity of the Amorites*" was complete.

F. Validation of God's Promise - Genesis 15:17

When the sun went down and it was dark, God alone, in the form of "*a smoking oven and a burning torch*", passed between the butchered animal parts. This indicated that (1) Abram had no obligations to fill in order to receive the covenant promises; and (2) God's pledge to fulfill the promises to Abram was irrevocable and indisputable.

The promise of the covenant to Abram was possession of the land which has come to be known as the Promised Land.

G. Boundaries of the Promised Land - Genesis 15:18-21

The extent of the territory promised to Abram's descendants was delineated by the covenant. The boundary limits would be the Nile River in the south and the Euphrates River in the north. The tribes enumerated in this passage were occupying the main part of this vast territory. Canaanite was the general name for all of these nations as well as the name of one of them.

IV. Ungodly Plan - Genesis 16:1-6**A. Failure to Trust God - Genesis 16:1-4**

After ten years of waiting for a child from God, Abram became fearful. Sarai suggested a plan to obtain an heir from Abram's own body. She would give her maid, Hagar, to Abram for sexual relations and then adopt the children as her own. This was the culturally accepted custom of the day. Abram agreed and Hagar conceived and became pregnant.

B. Analysis of Failure

The Hammurabi Code of the ancient East allowed a wife who had no children to give her husband a maidservant to bear children. However, Sarai's and Abram's failure to trust God, and instead use cultural practices to resolve their dilemma, was a double fault and sin. It clashed with God's desire for one man and one woman to be married and produce offspring. It also involved human schemes to carry out God's covenant with Abram. The consequence of their fleshly act brought a serious conflict and major crisis into their family. Once again, as in Egypt, Abram and Sarai foolishly failed to put their full trust under "*the shadow of His wings*".

C. Sarai and Hagar - Genesis 16:5-6

At this point, the consequence of sin reared its ugly head. When Hagar realized she was pregnant, she thought herself superior to Sarai. She may have imagined that God had bestowed on her what he had denied Sarai. Hagar's contemptuous attitude filled Sarai with envy and jealousy. The dispute threatened Sarai's authority in the household and she blamed Abram for what she had in fact suggested. Abram told her that Hagar was her problem and she must deal with it. The result was that Sarai treated Hagar harshly and Hagar ran away.

Application

Fear in the form of respect, honor and reverence for God is righteous fear (Proverbs 1:7). However, fear caused by doubt, discouragement and mistrust of God is ungodly anxiety and impatience. We read God's marvelous promises in His Word and then we become fearful when there is no observable fulfillment. These fears lead to doubts and we sometimes try our own solutions. Will you pray for God's help as you read these Scriptures meditatively: Philippians 4:6-7; Isaiah 41:10?

V. Hagar's Turn Around - Genesis 16:7-16**A. The Angel of the Lord - Genesis 16:7-12**

In her pregnant condition, Hagar fled into the wilderness toward her home country. The Angel of the Lord appeared

and told her to return and submit to her mistress, Sarai. He promised to multiply her descendants and told her to name her unborn son Ishmael. The character, words and power of the Angel of the Lord confirm Him to be the Son of God – a pre-incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Evidence for this conclusion are:

- The Angel of the Lord specifically identifies Himself with God (Exodus 3:2-5; Numbers 22:22-35).
- Those whom He confronts recognize Him as God.
- The Biblical writers call Him Lord (Yahweh).
- The title implies the plurality of the Godhead-Father, Son, Holy Spirit (H. C. Leupold, The Biblical Expositor).

B. Hagar's Obedience

Hagar appeared to be a woman of godly disposition. Personal contact with the Angel of the Lord caused her to view the situation more soberly and to settle her thoughts and feelings more justly. She should correct her self-willed departure and return to her mistress.

The Angel's description of her son implied that Ishmael would become a wild, fiercely aggressive, independent man along with his countless Arabic descendants. These words were meant to help Hagar in the training of her son to take proper steps to curb the wild and lawless elements of his nature. Historically, many Arabs have looked to Ishmael as their father and believe that Palestine belongs to them.

C. The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:13-16

Hagar was a young, pregnant woman alone in the wilderness. She was bitter and full of hatred for Sarai. As she rested by a spring, she was suddenly overwhelmed by the appearance of the Angel of the Lord who instructed her to return and submit to her mistress, Sarai. Hagar recognized and acknowledged that the One who spoke to her was "*the God-Who-Sees*". Even more, she understood and acknowledged that he had seen her, "*Him who sees me*".

Hagar obeyed the Lord's command, returned to Abram and Sarai and gave birth to a son, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old at the time.

Application.

In the days that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, God communicated directly and verbally to a few chosen people. With the completion of the New Testament, He now speaks to each of us directly and individually through His word and the Holy Spirit. Remember that God sees you and your need, just as He saw Hagar and He is speaking to you personally as you read the Bible, study and pray. Will you receive and obey His word as Hagar did?

QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read Notes and References.

1. a. Who was Melchizedek?

b. What was special about his life?
2. a. What is the meaning of justification?

b. What are the three phases of salvation?
3. Explain God's verification of His promise to Abram.
4. What was wrong about Abram and Sarai using cultural practices to resolve their dilemma?
5. Explain the change in Hagar after she ran away from Sarai.

DAY TWO: Read Genesis 17:1-9; 15:18; 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; Romans 4:11-12, 16.

6. a. How old was Abram when God appeared to him?

b. Are we told how God appeared to Abram? If so, how?

c. What did God tell Abram?
7. Was God speaking about a new covenant? Explain.
8. What new name did God give to Abram? Why did God change it?
9. What territory was promised to Abram and his descendants in the covenant?

DAY THREE: Read Genesis 17:10-14; Leviticus 12:3; and Acts 7:8.

10. Name and describe the outward sign imposed on Abraham for the covenant to be consummated.
11. Who was to be given the sign?
12. What happened to the child who did not receive the sign?

DAY FOUR: Read Genesis 17:15-27.

13. What new name did the Lord give Sarai, and what was her role to be?
14. How did the Lord answer Abraham's concern for Ishmael?
15. ? (Thought Question) Whom does the Lord's promise about Ishmael seem to identify with in the world today? Explain your answer.

DAY FIVE: Read Genesis 18:1-15 and Hebrews 13:2.

16. What happened at the trees of Mamre while Abraham was resting in the doorway of his tent?
17. What did Abraham do and say to the three guests?
18. What did Abraham and Sarah do for these three men?
19. The preparation of the meal and eating must have taken at least 1-2 hours. Do you think Abraham had the privilege of listening and speaking with the Lord during this time? Explain your answer.

DAY SIX: Re-read Genesis 18:1-15; also Jeremiah 32:17 and Romans 9:6-9.

20. a. What were the exact words Sarah heard the Lord say about her future?

b. What was Sarah's response and her thoughts to herself?
21. a. After the Lord corrected her, what did Sarah try to do?

b. What does this exchange teach us about the Lord's attributes?