

ABRAM'S DOUBTFUL JOURNEY TOWARD FAITH | GENESIS 15:1-6

In verses 1-5 (covered in sermon #5), we saw Abram appear to question whether God was going to come through on his previous promises. God was patient with Abram's impatience and doubt, but by verse 6, **he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness**. This verse says nothing about Abram's "salvation." In fact, the Scripture itself up to this time said nothing about personal salvation, only a vague promise of a coming deliverer (Gen. 3:15).

The doubt displayed in verses 2-3 are background to the covenant experience that follows.

ABRAM'S MYSTERIOUS COVENANT EXPERIENCE | GENESIS 15:7-12, 17

After the declaration of belief in verse 6, the Lord "introduced" Himself to Abram again, saying, **I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees** (v. 7). Since Abram no doubt knew all this, we wonder *why God made such a declaration?* While we cannot be sure, we can easily see that *this sounds like legal jargon*. If so, then what follows would be a legal contract or covenant. We find the same terminology in Exodus 20:2, before God gives the Law. Notice that God brought Abram out **to give thee this land to inherit it** (v. 7). Could it be that God, who had previously offered the land (Gen. 12:7, 13:15-17) was about to deliver on the promise?

But Abram *interrupts God!* And his interruption is one of doubt: **whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?** (v. 8).

In all of chapter 15, Abram has not spoken *a single word of faith!* In fact, he sounds like a skeptic if there ever was one!

The Lord responds with a mysterious instruction. Moses is to take a heifer, a goat, a ram, and two birds. (There is some mystery about the word **three**, whether it refers to *three years old* or *three heifers*, etc.). Abram then, without instruction (it seems) divided the mammals (but not the birds) and laid them face to face. Then we are told that **fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away** (v. 11). This was followed by **a deep sleep** and **an horror of great darkness** (v. 12). The whole scene concludes at sundown, **and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces** (v. 17).

And all of this is in response to Abram's question, **whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?** (v. 8). But what does it mean? And how does this help Abram to know that he shall inherit the land?

We could speculate and develop several acceptable answers as to the meaning of all this. Perhaps it would be better to *leave it like it is*, just seeing a mystery in which God was speaking both audibly and visually to Abram in response to his seeming doubt.

GOD'S CLEAR DELAY IN DELIVERY | GENESIS 15:13-21

In verse 7 God repeated His promise **to give thee this land**. But Abram doubts and complains (so it seems). But in verses 12-17 things change, drastically and quickly. Abram wants to know **that I shall inherit it** (v. 8), and the Lord responds, **Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs** (v. 13). God then Abram that they shall be servants **four hundred years** (v. 13) and then return to the Promised Land **with great substance** (v. 14) after **the iniquity of the Amorites** is full (v. 16). The Lord then makes it clear that **Unto thy seed have I given this land** (v. 18). All the while Abram **shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age** (v. 15).

Does it seem as if God just changed His mind about giving Abram the land? If so, that is because *He did*. There is no way to take this passage other than to say that God just installed a delay in delivering the promise. Abram would have to go to the grave in the faith that God would deliver, but with no portion of the land whatsoever. In his famous sermon, Stephen mentioned Abram, saying that God, **gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on** (Acts 7:5).

In one sense, God promised Abram something better. Though he would not get the land, his descendants would *get much more than originally promised*. In verse 18, God promises all the land **from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates**. This is a promise which has not been fulfilled to this day...but will!

A LESSON FROM ABRAM

When dealing with God, we would be much better to *leave it to Him*. Like Abram, we can put a constant pressure on God to deliver His promises...*NOW!* God is going to fulfill His Word, always. But His timing may not be ours, and our impatience may affect His timing.