



Week of March 17, 2019

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

¹ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

² But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

³ And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir."

⁴ But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir."

⁵ He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

⁶ And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

⁷ Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess."

⁸ But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"

⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

¹⁰ He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

Notes:

1. The splitting of animal carcasses was a part of a ritual when a contract was being created. The parties to the agreement would walk between the pieces together, signifying that should either party fail to live up to the agreement, they would become like the carcasses.

2. The smoking fire-pot and flaming torch are Biblical images of judgment and salvation – and thus they represent God.



Group Leader

Remember: you don't need to use all of the questions. Go with what works. Give people a chance to think before answering, but if a question falls flat, move on. Let the discussion go where it needs to go, as long as it remains centered around the lesson. Give the participants page 1. Use this page for yourself.

Gathering questions:

- A. Tell a story about a time when either you did something outlandish in order to keep a promise, or someone else did something outlandish to keep a promise to you.
- B. What is the strangest thing to you about Christian worship services?

Bible Study Questions:

1. How long would it take for you to give up on a promise? For example, if you felt that God promised you some desire of your heart – a partner, a new job, etc. – what is your expected time frame for the fulfillment of the promise?
2. What do you think is going through Abram's mind as he asks the question in verse 8?
3. Verse 6 is cited several times in the New Testament. Why do you think it was so important to the N.T. writers?
4. Also in verse 6, the Hebrew is literally that "he believed *in* the Lord", not "he believed the Lord." Some translations, notably the King James, retain the word "in." What difference does this make to your understanding of the verse?
5. In verse 12, why do you think that night was a "deep and terrifying darkness"?
6. When the items representing God pass between the pieces alone, it signifies that God's promise to Abram is unilateral – God is requiring nothing of Abram. When you serve others, do you have any expectations of them in return? Do you think this is justified?
7. What are promises God has made to you? Have you ever felt cut off from the promises of God?

Closing prayer: particularly invite prayers for reassurance of God's love and for a deeper commitment to Godly work.