

Gen. 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Gen. 15:2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?

Gen. 15:3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

Gen. 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

After the events just discussed, the word of the Lord comes to Abram in a vision. No problem with Abram. He just talks right back to it; there is no doubt in his mind that it is God. God tells Abram again that He is his protector and will reward him greatly. In talking with my daughter one morning, she pointed out that the shield protects one's most vulnerable parts; nothing can protect us better. An "exceeding great reward" makes reference to benefit that cannot be matched.

Abram replies with his human logic; he questions God--not in disrespect, but with a heart that wants to understand. Abram wants to know how God plans to bless him since he has no heir of his own seed. He also recognizes that the fact that he has no children of his own is because God has withheld this blessing. His heir at this time is a servant in his household. (Shouldn't it have been Lot?) Then God tells him that a son from his own body (his own seed) will be his heir.

Gen. 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

God tells Abram to look at the stars (which I am sure he could see clearly without all the man-made lights of the city interfering). His offspring were going to be as numerous as the stars.

(1/11) As I was reading through this section again, I couldn't help but remember my experience on the island of Eleuthra when for the first time I saw the Milky Way and all the stars so vividly with no light pollution. It was overwhelming!

Gen. 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Even though God never tells him how, Abram believed the Lord. Abram's belief was credited to him as righteousness. (We can never attain righteousness through our own efforts. The fact that he was trusting God to work through him—faith—was righteous before God. Cf Heb 11:6)

Heb. 11:6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Gen. 15:7 And he said unto him, I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

Gen. 15:8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

God then reminds Abram that He is the same Lord who brought him from Ur to take possession of this land. Again, Abram questions—(9/06) How can I know this? In other words, give me a sign. The Jews became known by their desire for signs; it must have been an inherited trait from the founder of their nation.

1Cor. 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

Gen. 15:9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

Gen. 15:10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

I've read that this was a ritual used to seal a covenant or promise between persons.

Gen. 15:11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

I had a note in my Bible that the picture of the birds of prey is symbolic of Satan trying to thwart God's plan.

Gen. 15:12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

Gen. 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

Gen. 15:14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

Gen. 15:15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

Gen. 15:16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Abram falls into a deep sleep and is surrounded by a great fear. (9/06) I just noticed that the "he" in verse 13 seems to refer to the "horror of great darkness." There are other places in scripture that equate the presence of God with darkness—Exodus 20:21, Deuteronomy 5:23 and 1Kings 8:12. The first two reference times that the presence of God produced a holy fear in the people. I think it reflects a natural response to the presence of a holy, righteous God. Even in his sleep, Abraham sensed His presence.

Then God speaks to him and tells him what to expect in the future:

- 1) His descendants will be strangers in a country not their own (Egypt).
- 2) They will serve as slaves and be mistreated for 400 years.
- 3) God will punish the nation that enslaves them.
- 4) When they leave that country, it will be with great possessions.
- 5) Abram will die in peace at a "good old age."
- 6) In the 4th generation (evidently 100 years = a generation) his descendants will come back to Canaan. In this time the Amorites will have reached the point at which God determines their sin must be judged.

Gen. 15:17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

God sent the fire to burn the meat. It was a sign that recognized Abram's obedience and confirmed His message from the Lord. The promise from the Lord was unconditional—nothing was required from Abraham to ensure its fulfillment.

Gen. 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

Gen. 15:19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

Gen. 15:20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

Gen. 15:21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

God promised Abram and his descendants the land from the river of Egypt (the Nile) to the Euphrates. This would involve getting rid of the current residents of this area. As the list is given, we have to remember that these are idolatrous peoples. (I've had a hard time in the past reconciling God's justice in commanding the Israelites to destroy these people. Verse 16 indicates that God allows them plenty of time to repent, until their cup of sin is full and demands judgment be delayed no longer. That is when He allows the Jews to go in and conquer the land.)

The future described to Abram had many good things, but also some bad news (mistreatment and enslavement for a long time). We are never told Abram's response to this message—did he just accept it? Did he not want to know why slavery and harsh treatment had to be part of their experience?