

# The Abrahamic Faith (1 of 2)

by Art Katz

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*The sermon explores the significance of Abraham's call and its universal implications, emphasizing the importance of faith, protection, and reward.*

**Duration:** 1:17:09

**Scripture:** Genesis 15:1, Acts 10:9

**Topics:** "Abrahamic Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the brevity of the scriptures and the depth of meaning they contain. The focus is on Genesis 15, where God promises Abram that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. The speaker shares a personal anecdote about looking at the sky and being reminded of God's promise. Abram, however, expresses his concern about not having any children and suggests that his servant, Eleazar, might be his heir. The speaker encourages the audience to engage with the text themselves before turning to commentaries for insight.

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## Transcript

...opportunity to look at Genesis 15. It's remarkable how terse, t-e-r-s-e, the scriptures are. I never cease to marvel at how much can be said in so few words.

Just contrary to the whole sphere of the world, whose mouth is always running off, that the volume of the world speaking far exceeds its content. So, here's one episode in the life of Abraham, but it's a critical episode. Maybe we can say that everything that has taken place with Abraham from Genesis chapter 12 was preparation for what is going to be performed in 15, and everything that follows is the result of it.

And if that's not true, I think it is true that it's a good way to perceive things. Everything till now has been preparation. Everything from now, issues from this moment, has its significance because of it.

That's a... I've never quite seen it or said it like that before, but it's a good way to perceive reality itself. Have you ever said that? Everything till now has been preparation. There's a certain significance to now as it will affect all the future.

What a wonderful way to perceive life. Well, Abraham has just come back from a victory over the kings of Sodom. He has rescued his nephew Lot and has refused the reward that was offered him by the earthly king.

It says in chapter 14, verse 22, I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal, thong, or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich. Oh, how can you not help but love this man? These are not puppets or automatons, mechanical pieces of humanity, and God is merely moving chess pieces on a board. These are flesh and blood men, and of whom the world is not worthy.

And it says the eye of God rose to and fro over the face of the earth, seeking the heart of that one to reveal himself to that one whose heart is turned toward him, shows that though God is sovereign, there is a profound, immeasurably profound place for human freedom and response toward God. In fact, I would say the freedom to respond to God is the essential freedom that makes man man. This is the heart of what is at our humanity.

We're not automatons, we're not puppets, we're not being jerked. There's not a God who is working out his spectacular will despite us. It's a God who is so great, he's working out his spectacular will through us in a freedom in which we yield to his will and give ourselves.

So it's a remarkable drama, and Abraham was called. He could have turned a deaf ear to that call. I can remember one instance to my eternal embarrassment.

I was very young in the faith, only months old, washing the dishes in my little one-room apartment in Oakland, California, having just come back from the trip in which I had found the Lord, and a voice said, Arthur, and I kept doing the dishes, and a few months later, Arthur, and I kept doing the dishes, and I never turned or asked. I just could not believe, I had not the faith yet to believe that I was being addressed by God. Just to recover myself, there have been other episodes since, where the Lord has been, his voice has been yet more still and small, and I have heard and turned and asked.

So the whole of our faith begins with God's call to a man, Abraham, and if we had the time and could go back and see the origin of that call, and how it comes right on the heels of the colossal rebellion of nations in Genesis 10, who were moving eastward at their own volition, and seeking to establish themselves and to raise their tower of Babel, and to reach into the heavens, that has all of the elements that constitutes the last day's world system, the unification, the ecumenical, political, religious combination of men who want to be as God. What was at the beginning will be also at the end, and God brought that attempt down by confusing languages and dispersing them over the earth, as he will also bring the last day's rebellion down as well. And then the call to Abraham.

The nations have failed, they have rebelled against God, they refuse to recognize his program, his plan, and then God establishes his plan, by the call of one man who becomes the father of faith, the father of Israel, and the nation central to all nations. Isn't that remarkable? God's whole program, his whole theocratic design for creation, comes with the call to one man. Resting on the ability of a man to hear God's voice, in, so to speak, Babylon, in Colbia, in Ur, the city where Abraham lived, in the midst of all of the idols and everything that was anti-God, one man heard his voice and was called out and came.

He hesitated, he delayed, there was a significant delay, I was almost going to say I'm happy for that, but only in the sense, I'm never happy for any disobedience to God, and procrastination is disobedience. When chapter 12 begins, and, well, let's take a look at that. So Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken, in verse 4, but it's much later than when God's first call came, because the Lord had said to Abraham, get thee out of your country and from your kindred in your father's house.

But we know that when he did go, it was not from Ur of the Chaldeans, but from Haran, which word means delay, and that instead of leaving his father's house, he took his father with him. Instead of leaving his kindred, he took his mishpochah, he took life. So in a word, it's a disappointment and it's an encouragement.

We would love to have seen pure obedience to God in the moment of his call. What we see is delay and a mixed obedience. He couldn't bring himself to a whole.

Before coming out, he lingered. In fact, Haran is alongside the same river where Ur of the Chaldeans was. You need to understand the power of rivers.

In the Fertile Crescent, the river civilizations of Mesopotamia, everything, not just economy but culture, rested on river. They were river civilizations. Their commerce, their trade, their significance, everything rested on the flow of rivers.

But when you come into the land, there's no river of any significance at all. You say, what about Jordan? Enormously significant spiritually, but in terms of being a Nile or a Tigris or a Euphrates whose rise and fall and effluvia, what do you call it, that brings the prime soil, zero. When you come into the land, you don't look down at rivers for your economic well-being.

You look up to heaven from whence cometh the early rain and the latter rain. And even that is not just a matter of fixed rhythm of nature, but in response and obedience to the God of heaven who sends it and will withhold it in disobedience. See, the whole economy, the whole order of things profoundly changes when you cross over and come into the land.

The word Hebrew, Abraham is a Gentile by birth, just to encourage you guys around the table here. He became a Hebrew, just like you, by crossing over. And that's the very root of the meaning of the word Hebrew, one who crosses over.

And what a crossing over that is. You leave everything behind you. The whole pattern of life.

And I think from all that scholars have been able to establish, it wasn't as if Abraham was a man who had not much to lose. He had everything to lose. He was a man of substantial possession.

And they say that the homes of men of his class at his time was not lacking in anything that would bless people of solid middle-class stature today. Hot and cold running water. And maids and servants and all of the kinds of things that one would be loath to leave behind.

And I can't think of a more profound description of the cross than to leave nation, kindred, and father's house and follow me in the land that I will show you. Tremulous, uncertain, fearful, insecure. To follow some nebulous god in a life, in a civilization that believed in many gods.

Who is this one now who speaks and says, follow me. This is the living god. This is the true god.

And follow me in the land that I will show you. It requires an active, dynamic faith. Everything is open.

And requires an intimacy and being cast upon god, independency. Moment by moment, day by day. The land that I will show you.

The call to Abraham is the cross. Everything that's dear to men in their flesh. Nation, kindred, and father's house.

God says, get thee out. He says, don't linger. He says, don't be partial.

All this and heaven too. Get thee out. It's the most radical call to separation.

It's nothing less than the cross. And the fact that Abraham could not bring himself to that totality and that he delays in the place in Haran. And the delay was so long that it says they gathered many souls there and much substance.

It wasn't some overnight delay. It may well have been a matter of years. In fact, what finally releases Abraham to be obedient to God's call is the death of his father, Terah.

T-E-R-A-H, I think it is. Isn't it interesting how death is the key to life? And the day that I saw the Lord, it was when King Uzziah died. I've always wondered, what's in Isaiah 6? Is that a mere piece of chronological coincidence or a significant release for Isaiah? In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

In the day that Abram's father died, Abraham departed as his Lord had spoken unto him. And this is the father of faith, saints. And I love it.

Do you know why? Because he's no tin saint. He's flesh and blood like us. He hesitates.

He delays. He's a mixed bag. He hears, but he doesn't hear.

He comes, but he doesn't come. He drags his feet. He lingers, but he finally does come.

And so the patience of God to show us that... I'm not putting before you a model who's so lofty and so mystical, God's man of faith and power, that you couldn't ever hope to attain to his virtuality. I'm showing you he's flesh and blood just as you. And I'll bring you as I brought him.

And we all know that his righteousness was not some intrinsic virtue that he possessed, but was imputed to him because of his faith. And we're going to examine that in just a moment. So there's a long investment of God in Abram before chapter 15.

God's covenantal call to Abram is already in chapter 12. You'll bless all the nations of the earth, all the families of the earth. The significance of what you're about in me is universal.

All nations will be affected by your obedience. How would you like that call? As a matter of fact, if you have not recognized Abraham's call as your call, you're out of the faith. That is your call.

And all nations will be affected by your obedience to it. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

So God has given Abram lavish promise. In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. I will make you a great nation.

Out of your progeny, out of your loins, out of your seed, all nations, all families of the earth will be blessed. Okay. So after these things, all of our little introduction, are these things that have preceded what is now going to take place.

After these things, and those things must proceed, there's a preparation. Then there comes a moment, and it's that significant moment we want now to examine because it has implications for all generations, particularly for the end and for the nation Israel that will spring out of Abram's loins. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, isn't it remarkable everything is predicated upon the word? It began with the word Abram, Abraham, Abram.

Abraham comes later. When God, Ezra, that was not there originally, which some commentators say was the very breath of God. He breathed into Abraham one syllable more.

That was the difference between Abram and Abraham, father of many nations. So it comes by the word. And what is the word that came to him in a vision? And I'm going to read to you from this remarkable commentary by Kael and Delitzsch.

And I think Delitzsch is a Hebrew Christian commentator of the 19th century, and it may well be a proof of what our mother in Israel, Marie, has told me frequently. She said, there's something given to you Jewish believers that's unique and is not to be expected in those that are not Jewish, namely an insight into the word of God and an ability in the proclaiming of it that is reserved for you alone. I hope it doesn't sound vain.

It's just confirmed by Paul and it says, how much more when you shall be grafted back into your own root? And you'll see that when I read from this man. Just like David Barron and the other great Hebrew Christian commentators, it is superb how he interprets this chapter. But first we'll see how stupefying this chapter is, how it defies interpretation, and what he makes of just this one beginning that the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision.

Not a dream, probably a daytime experience, something like what happened to Peter when he had that vision in Joppa of the veil that came down before him. But it raises interesting questions. God could have appeared to him in fact.

But no, this comes in a vision, and there's a reason for everything. And when do you hear the reason that this commentator gives? But first you need to try and supply your own. Don't ever turn directly to a commentary.

First wrestle through yourself with as much as you're able yourself to draw from the text. Read other versions of the same text. Ponder it.

Weigh it in your spirit. And then after you've exhausted everything in your own contemplations, meditation, then turn to see what God has given as insight to other gifted men. That's what we will do.

Okay, what is the word? Isn't that interesting? We're so preoccupied. I don't know of any previous prophetic school where the subject of fear had greater prominence than this one. Maybe because we're in a more serious hour than previous schools, and we're about something of greater significance, and the enemy is raising up his specter and harassments, but that there's been a real question of fear that has come up in our discussion and prayer, and that the first thing that God says to Abram, do not fear Abram.

It's not a suggestion, it's a commandment. And maybe the only antidote to fear is the word of God. Because he says we should not, we don't.

Though we may have every reason otherwise to fear, he says so. So what do we do after that? The Lord has spoken. I think there's a great wisdom in that, or else we would continually justify our fears, as if it's a luxury that we are free to indulge.

God says it has nothing to do with circumstance, or the opposition of the enemy, or any kind of dread thing of last days turmoil, we're going to come through this final hour of tribulation, and things that shall come upon the earth, and men's hearts will fail them for fear. But for us, do not be afraid. Why? Because I say so.

Okay, Lord. I am a shield to you. He's not just speaking to Abram, he's speaking to the man who is the father of faith, and it's the appropriate word for the seed of Abram, the children of faith in every generation, especially the last.

I am a shield to you. I'll give you a white shadow. Nothing can touch you, you're under a halo.

The powers of the darkness can foam at the mouth, and be perplexed, and relish your destruction. They cannot touch you. Not a hair on your head, unless I allow it.

Remember what Jesus said to Pontius Pilate? He was this helpless piece of humanity, he had already been knocked from pillar to post, he was full of bruises, and cuts, and blood, and up all the night between... Sanhedrin? He was in the house of Caiaphas, and now finally brought before this Roman authority. And he was supposed to buckle and sag, and plead for his earthly existence. And he was just perfectly calm and unperturbed.

Imperturbable. And Pontius Pilate, don't you know that I have the power either to destroy you or to release you? You could do nothing against me, except if we're giving you from above. Oh, hallelujah.

Dear saints, we ought to walk through this world, not in some kind of arrogance, but certainly not coward with fear or intimidation, but as men and women who are under the divine protection of the same God who protected Abraham, and protects all the children of Abraham in every generation, and yet allows his martyrs. Allows. And when we turn to Revelation 13, 7, it says, And it was given to him, the Antichrist, to make war against the saints and to overcome them.

What? God allowed his own choice? Saints of whom the world is not worthy? To suffer and to die at the hands of Antichrist? Yes. It is serving an ultimate purpose. But it is not the outworking of the powers of darkness in their own ability.

It was given unto him. Right. Yes.

Nothing except to come down from above. That's a precious confidence. And I don't think it will come down until the purposes for our being have been fulfilled.

Let's say, David served his generation and fell asleep. I occasionally pray that, Lord, let me serve my generation in the same Davidic heart and purity and fullness, and then let me fall asleep. But let nothing remain undone or unattended that you have designed and intended for me.

However small, whatever little place in your vineyard, let the full outworking of it be performed, and then take me. However, it doesn't matter. Be confident of that.

I am a shield to you, your reward shall be very great. Boy, I tell you, if there's ever any three statements, three sentences that are appropriate for saints of the last days who are the seed of Abraham, it is these three. Just to encourage your hearts, I have not rehearsed any of this.

I didn't think to myself, well, first I'll take apart the statement, nothing. It's just happening. This is what God is wanting us to seem to understand.

This is not just a moment in history that came to man in a vision. This is the timeless and eternal counsel of God for the seed of Abraham in all generations, especially the last. Three great statements.

Don't be afraid. I'm a shield to you. Boy, if you've got a shield like that, what can penetrate it? And your reward shall be very great.

Hallelujah. I'm always inviting people to my mansion in heaven. I have not seen, you have not heard, and I'm not a glutton for voluptuous luxury, but there's a treasure being laid up.

There's reward, there's honor of an eternal kind that we will say it was worth it all. Every privation, every humiliation, every rebuke, every unjust act toward us, every physical suffering is a reward, a very great reward. And the peculiar nature of the Church is, unlike any other entity in the world, it is a people who can give themselves full bore in total consecration and commitment and giving this to God now in anticipation of reward that comes to them.

There's nothing like that in the world. The world always has to give us reward now. Fame, fortune, your name, your reputation.

You'll do this, you'll get this, you'll be on the Riviera, you'll get a car, you'll marry a girl, blah, blah. Now, this is the now generation, wants its gratification now. Unlike that, only the Church, the true Church, can serve God totally without any anticipation of its compensation coming now.

Its great reward comes after. But it will come because God has spoken. And rewards are not something to be disregarded.

We just, I didn't watch any bit of it, but we just have finished with the Olympics and boy, did you read the preparations these athletes go through? I mean, it makes the generation of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin look like a Boy Scout outing. This is scientific. This is almost occultic.

How they prepare not only the bodies, but the minds of these athletes and their inward attitudes and what they believe and they get them all revved up and the exercises, the diets, they have counselors that are professional just for their morale. And they shave their heads and they've got costumes now that are made out of one of the most sophisticated fabrics that will shave off 1,000th millimeter of a fraction of a second, which is the difference between victory and defeat. You cannot believe what is invested in running the race, in obtaining the earthly reward.

And what they're going to get now in millions in endorsements of products. This girl who got four gold medals in swimming and she's already a culture hero and she's going to endorse this product and that product and swimming suits and bathing caps and toothpaste and she'll have a fortune before she's 25. That's the name of the game, that they give themselves for the reward now.

And we'll all fade away and turn to dust. Our reward is eternal and abiding. So, and Abram said, Oh Lord God, what will thou give me since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eleazar of Damascus? Abram said, since thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.

Do you understand what is on Abram's heart? Lord, you're making all these lavish promises. I'm going to be the father of many nations. But where's my progeny? Where's my, it's got to come from my body.

Where's the son of promise that you've said you're going to give me? I'm barren. I'm living with a woman who's never had any children and I'm getting up there in years. And if you don't provide an offspring, this Eleazar, according to the understanding of that time and generation, he will become the descendant.

Now what would you say that this reveals something selfish in Abram? That he wants the honor and distinction of himself giving forth a son that inherits these things? Is he jealous for himself? No. He's really asking the things that pertain to God's own glory. How can you make these lavish promises to me and I don't see any yet possible fulfillment and the hope for it is fast fading away.

If that's not the heart and essence of what it means to live in faith, I don't know what it means. Haven't you experienced that? A sense of futility, if not desperation, and where is God, and where is the fulfillment of the very thing that he led you to expect? And the disappointment that comes. So it's a classic episodic situation.

Thou hast given me no offspring. I have to say this way, he knows where offspring comes from. Thou hast given me no offspring.

And if offspring comes, thou givest it. Because it doesn't come because I'm able to copulate and perform biologically and spermatozoa with the eggs and the blah blah. No, thou givest.

Here's a man who knows the heart of cause and effect. It has not to do with nature. That's only God's apparatus.

It has to do with the God who gives. Thou hast not given. And if you don't give, it doesn't come.

And I'm not looking for it from any other source. I'm not going to take vitamins and become fertile and do yoga. It's got to come from you.

Can you see why God loves Abram? And he saw that heart when Abram was in the Ur of the Chaldees in the midst of idolatry. He saw the heart of that man. His eye rose to and forth over the face of the earth seeking that one whose heart is perfect toward him.

The fact that there's only one manner of speaking, so few out of the heart perceive the issues of life. And that heart is revealed by Abraham even in his question, even in his understanding. Thou hast not given.

Then, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, not to upbraid him, not to rebuke him, not to say, you're way off the wall. He agrees with him. He understands Abram's framework of thinking and expectancy.

It's perfectly legitimate and says, this man will not be your heir, but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir. And he took him outside and said, now look toward the heavens and count the stars if you're able to count them. And he said to him, so shall your descendants be.

He's talking to a man who's pushing a hundred past any biological age of being capable of producing children with a wife that has been barren all her ages, all her life long. What does it say in Romans? Abraham hoped against hope. When all basis for human hope was gone, Abraham continued to hope against hope.

Looking upon his body, now as good as dead, Abraham hoped against hope. Was it just a circumstance that he had a wife who was barren? No. The superb details of God that the whole Abrahamic faith has to have its origin out of human hopelessness.

No confidence in the flesh at all. In all that is barren, weak, despairing, all the more heightened by the lavish promises that God gives. That you will bless all the families on the earth.

That makes you all the more conscious of your frailty, of your inadequacy, of your terrible humanity and emptiness. We wouldn't be so conscious of it if we had not so great a call. So there's the conjunction of the great call with our body as good as dead.

That is the very nexus of the way of God in the earth. And God's answer to the rebellion of nations described in Genesis 10 who wanted to make a name for themselves. In such haste that they burned their brick, they baked it in fire because they couldn't wait for the sun to dry it.

So impatient to make a ziggurat, a Babylonian tower into the heavens to study the stars for occultic reasons and to defy God and to supersede God and to be as good. To counteract all that and to show his intention for the nations, God fingers one man and gives him a wife who is barren and gives him lavish promises and waits till there's beyond any hope that they can be fulfilled out of his own humanity. And then by the faith of the man according to what God has spoken begins the setting in motion of the fulfillment.

And we're going to talk about what Abrahamic faith is. Oh, my glasses are getting steamed up. So God is promising, takes him outside to see the stars.

So shall your descendants be. Not just the scraggly one or two, but the great abundance. By the way, I had to say however much I missed my sleep last night in having to pick Peter up and get to bed about one and finally park the car after we got his luggage out, I just happened to look up and what a sky.

You should have seen the sky. Did anyone take a glimpse? Awesome. It was awesome.

The constellations, not just the brilliance of individual stars, there's like a milky way. There's a whitish haze and it's fixed, it doesn't move. And in fact, we saw a falling star on the way from the airport.

My jaw dropped. I said, look, thank you for the privilege of looking up at the sky. I had forgotten the magnificence of it.

So we have to be taken out of our tent and be told, look up. And I don't know how many times that I've been depressed, weighted down, feeling hopeless and futile. Lord, what are we doing here? And this is nothing and we're just knocking about and nothing seems to succeed and we're dragging and we're lacking in this and that.

We're all finances and look up. What does it say in Genesis chapter 1? God made the heaven and the earth and he made the stars also. Like a little after point.

Oh, by the way, not only the heavens and the earth and all that in them is, but he made the stars also. That's why God will hold every man accountable for the failure to acknowledge him, for his reality is written in his creation. Then he believed in the Lord, verse 6. What do we imply? Maybe he didn't quite believe until then.

When you believe, when all basis for believing is gone, you really believe. And we're going to get into this in a moment. He takes up the Hebrew word for faith and the etymology, the origin of the word and its Hebraic meanings, staggering.

You just want to crawl into a hole for what we have thought the word faith means. What is implied in the great word believe is not just assent to a credo. It is ultimate trust and confidence in a person whose word is the statement of his character.

Requires a knowledge of God. And that knowledge does not come cheaply. And that's why maybe then he believed.

It took all that... How does this chapter begin? After these things? It took these things first to come to a place of authentic, biblical, Abrahamic faith. Then he believed. When all basis for hope was gone and God reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Have you ever dwelt on that? Is it like a reward for believing? And what's the connection between righteousness and faith? And if it's reckoned or imputed, it makes clear it's nothing that could ever have its origin in man. It's the distinctive of what God himself is. In a certain sense, God imputed himself to Abraham.

He gave him his life, his character, his righteousness on the basis of believing. He was able to entrust him with the treasure of himself because he believed. I don't even want to cheapen things by even making an allusion to the faith and prosperity quote message that had been current in our generation in believing for a Cadillac, believing... Always this is another dimension of believing.

The two things should not even be mentioned in the same breath. And he said to him, remember all this is a vision, it's not an actual experience. It could have been, but it was given in a vision, this conversation with God.

It was born in vision, the whole Abrahamic faith and righteousness, the whole genius of it comes to Abraham, not even in a dream or an experience or a visitation, but a vision. I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess it. Okay you guys, your turn.

Exegete God's statement. Draw out its meaning. Of all the things that God could say, what does he say to Abraham? I am the Lord.

I am that I am. When Moses said to the God of the burning bush, who should I tell the people is sending me? I mean, who am I? I'm in exile for the murder of an Egyptian 40 years before and they don't know me from beans. Tell them I'm the God of their fathers.

I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I'm the God of Israel. Moreover, this shall be my name throughout all your generations.

I am that I am. I will be who I will be. God's eternal designation of himself.

And that's why in John 8, when Jesus is being mocked and taunted by his peers, who do you think you are? You think you're greater than the prophets? You think you're greater than our father Abraham? You Johnny come lately, you 33 year old, or whatever he was. Well, he said, I'll tell you that before Abraham was, I am. That doesn't leave you much room.

You either have got to fall on your face and cry out, my Lord and my God, or you have to do what they did. They took up stones to kill him. You don't take the name of the Lord to yourself, except you are the Lord.

Before Abraham was, I am. And he was glad and he saw my day. So I am the Lord, God's first statement to Abraham, who brought you out to bring you in.

I didn't just take you out of a place of idolatry, but I took you out to bring you in. You need to remember that. To give you this land to possess it.

So this saves us from ethereal spirituality, lofty, intangible promises that have only to do with eternity. This land, the specificity of God, terra firma, this piece of real estate, not just to contemplate, to possess. That's the reason why I brought you out.

And of course, with the land, it's not just a place to grow a garden. It includes the holy hill of Zion. And out of it will come the law that will bless all the families of the earth.

But don't ever separate the one from the other. And you'll hear even men today say, God is not interested in real estate. Israel is no more significant to God than upstate New York, Bologna.

This land is specific, it's given, it has everything to do with God's purposes, to be enacted in time, in history and in place, and it's possession given to Abraham and to his seed. I've called you out that you might possess this. Now we come into the mystery.

And Abraham said, O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it? And God does not dispute the question, but he gives a mysterious answer. Bring me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old female goat and a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. Then he brought all these to him and cut them in two and laid each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds.

Why didn't he cut the birds? They were too small to be cut. Every item here has to do with the traditional sacrifices that are later to be performed by Israel. Maybe the only thing of question is three-year-old.

And God is so specific in his requirement, nor does Abraham in any way question him. Why this? Why that? How come? What do you mean? That's what we would say. How come? Before.

Why? He did it. Abrahamic faith... Why this? Why that? How come? What do you mean? That's what we would say. How come? Before.

Why? He did it. Abrahamic faith is implicit obedience to what God speaks without requiring explanation. Yeah.

Later, the explanation might come. When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and Peter demurred, Lord, not my feet. And Jesus, if I wash not your feet, you have no part in me.

And he says, later you will understand. Now you obey. Have you had that in your experience? If you haven't had, you will have.

Don't balk in that moment. However much it contradicts all your categories, even what you think would be incompatible with God. And when you have a spirituality to hear God, even when he calls you to the things that seem opposed to your understanding of him, which is exactly what happens to Abraham in being called to take Isaac and make of him a sacrifice.

Even there, Abraham rose early, he cut the wood, stacked it, took his ass and his son, and he went up. No ifs and buts, no explanations. He heard the voice of the Lord.

It shattered all of his categories, and it meant the removal of the son of promise, through whom all these fulfillments are to come. Seems to contradict all of God's careful plan and intention. Yet he did not hesitate for a moment.

And I don't think he even discussed it with Sarah. She would not have understood. She would have gone hysterical.

He just simply rose up early in the morning, and he did it. Faith is obedience, and it's prompt obedience. Without delay, without procrastination, Abraham had learned his lesson in Haran.

And here now, perfectly obedient in what God requires. Faith is obedience. So he cut them in two.

Can you picture this? Right through the middle, and laid them out like that. Like as if on this white line, one side, one half this side, one half that side. One of the reasons why this comes to Abraham in a vision.

Don't forget, nothing of this is actually being enacted. It's all in a vision. He sees himself doing this in a vision.

The conversation is in a vision. This is not actually a real event. But as Delitzsch is going to tell us, it's for that reason more significant.

Can you picture that? Because it's a vision, it's all the more spiritually significant than if it had taken place in fact. And I'm thinking of that because of Jim's remark. Maybe physically, and actually, you can't cut them in a vision, but in a vision you can.

And it had to be done in the vision, and if it's a vision, is it less real? Is it an unreality? Is it just a flighty, imaginative, imaginary thing? Or is it all the more real for the precision of what is being done that could not have been enacted in a fact? That's why it has to come in vision. But why that? It's unprecedented. It's not been this way heretofore, but it was not done this way.

God could not have walked between the pieces. The glory of God came through the pieces to validate, ratify, and endorse this sacrifice as being the answer to Abram of how shall I inherit this land? This is how you're going to inherit it, through covenant. We will make a covenant, you and me, and we are represented in the two halves, you in the one, and I in the other, and I will walk between to solemnify and ratify and establish this forever.

And it's on the basis of covenant that this is going to be performed. Covenant is exclusive, unique, unprecedented. It may have some, what's the word, adumbration, some understanding, even by pagan peoples, where they made agreements and contracts, but this has its origin in God.

God is the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God, and here we're seeing it at its very inception, that there's no fulfillment to the promise of Abraham except through it, and there's no fulfillment for us except

through it. We are the people of the new covenant, not new in the sense of novelty, new only in the sense in the way in which the old covenants and all the covenants of God speak substantially the same thing, it's new only in the way of fulfillment. I will write my law in your heart, and I will do it.

And we even see the presentiment of that here, because although covenant requires the willful agreement of two parties, this is choice of ultimate radical kind. This is commitment unto death, that's why the animals are cutting. There's no turning back here, there's no, I'll try it on, see if it works, and if not, I'll see you around sometime.

This is once and for all, it's absolute, it's total, it's death. Death to any thought that I might have had for myself, and coming into an agreement with you, God, on the grounds that you require it. An absolute cutting through.

That's why they say they cut a covenant. You don't make a covenant, you cut it. It's the Brit Hadashah, it's the cutting of the covenant.

It requires blood, as I said to someone the other day over the table, if circumcision does not bring forth blood, it's not valid. Even in present Jewish understanding, it's only then a hygienic thing. It's the blood, the actual cutting that establishes the authenticity.

And when you lay two pieces down the middle, there's no chance they're going to come together again. You're not going to pick up after that and try, try again. It's a once and for all, in utter totality.

And if it was not that, God would not honor it. If he sees any hedging, if there's something partial, something withheld, that is not total, not absolute, not wholly given over, he has no part in that. And that's why so many marriages fail.

He's the third court, only when the two courts are authentic in their bonding and in their joining, because they have cut something together and they symbolize that in the ring that goes all around. Circum means around. To circumvent the world is to go around the world.

To circumvent the flesh is to cut it off and around and entirely. Jesus was cut off and out of the land of the living by his crucifixion. He was circumcised without hands.

And in doing that, he established the new covenant. He was cut off and out. And we who join him are cut off and out also from the land of the living.

Dalish raises the question, he's looking for the symbolic significance of these animals. He said, how come they were not seven? But when you add them all up, what was required here? The heifer, the female goat, the ram, the young pigeon, and cut them in half. He said, you finally come to eight pieces.

And I don't see the significance of eight. Seven I would have seen as completion. Don't you understand? Eight is the number of resurrection.

It's the number of new beginnings. That's why it's eight. There's a life that comes out of this death.

And it's everlasting and eternal and abundant. It's on the basis of that life that we are to obtain the land and to possess it. So he brought all these to him in verse 10 and cut them in two and laid each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds.

They were too small. They were not to be cut. And we can ask what each of these animals signifies, a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon.

They all are symbolic of something. And I'll read you Delitch's way of interpreting this. A great Hebrew Christian scholar, intimate knowledge of Hebrew.

And the birds of prey came in verse 11 down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away. You can imagine who the birds of prey are. And it's not that they're just wanting a meal.

They want to abolish. They want to exterminate. They want to remove this thing before it becomes established.

Paul they know and Jesus they know, but who are you? And wherever they see the apostolic prophetic authenticity, there they are to try to devour it. Just like the child with a dragon, the male child that's born to the woman in the wilderness. There's the dragon waiting to devour it.

And it says of Israel in its last days tribulation that its enemies eat them up and devour them. Like bread. We read that the other day.

A remarkable graphic picture. It's not just enough to slay something. You've got to devour it to remove its very existence.

And Abram drove them away. It's his one act after laying out these parts and then after that he falls into a deep sleep. So verse 12 Now when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abram and behold terror and great darkness fell upon him.

And this is the statement in this chapter that has always intrigued me. Remember we spoke about the clouds and that somehow the glory of God is shrouded in clouds and in darkness. And a great darkness came over the land when Jesus was being crucified so that Jesus' crucifixion was the circumcision made without hands.

That is the seal of the new covenant for all peoples. And in that cutting again a darkness and great dread and terror comes over the earth. What we need to ask is what is the conjunction between the establishing of this enormously symbolically significant act of cutting and of covenant that somehow can only be enacted together with darkness dread and terror.

And I get a chill even as I say that that this must therefore then be the nation Israel's final experience. In the darkness dread and terror of its last day's tribulation comes its recognition of its covenant making God and its union with Him at last. And there's no other way that's the way it was with Abram in the beginning that's the way it will be with the seed of Abram at the end.

And that darkness and its clouds are gathering now already. For anyone to want Israel's fulfillment in the possession of the land without this covenant and without the conditions of this covenant is to be dreaming. It's not to reckon on God's way.

I'll tell you what I think some if not much of our problem is we have trivialized God. We have not understood intuited the glory of God. The things that the ineffable that means unspeakable you can't find words for it.

If God is now going to manifest His glory symbolized through that smoking pot and torch that passes through these parts that have been cut in two can that come without darkness to shroud it? Could Moses come up into God's presence without first being in the cloud for six days and then being called up out of the thick cloud? And it's not a little white billowy thing. It's a fearful pulsating fire and the darkness and smoke of God's glory. And that Moses cannot directly just come up and out and say here I am.

He had to pass through six days a day for each aspect of his humanity six being the number of men. And here also now is God Himself coming to solemnify and ratify a covenant with man in His glory and it's got to be shrouded in darkness. God is coming to Israel.

God is coming into the world. And He's coming in His clouds. And the reason that we stagger at this and don't understand the necessity for the darkness in which He must be encased is we don't understand the glory.

This is God. What does it say in Hebrews 13 about the tremble? This is not God speaking from Sinai but from... It's a consuming fire. It's a consuming fire.

Fear, dread. This is God. And Abraham had to sleep through that.

God is calling you to a use that involves His glory. There must necessarily be a darkness that precedes it. Now it's interesting to read what Delitzsch writes.

And I don't know the time of that writing but it was either the late 19th century or early 20th century. Certainly long before the Hithertime. And he says, passing through the pieces he ratified the covenant which he made with Abraham.

His glory was enveloped in fire and smoke the product of the consuming fire both of which are symbols of the wrath of God. We didn't look at verse 17. And it came about when the sun had set that it was very dark and behold there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between those pieces.

It wasn't just mere dark. Very dark. And then there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch.

It sounds very much like the cloud by night and the fire by day. But it symbolizes God's own presence and His glory passing through the pieces and that's what makes the covenant a covenant. After the conditions have been found acceptable.

In fact His presence passing through the pieces is the statement of His acceptance of the sacrifice. In the same way that when they finished the Temple of Solomon and even in the very first establishment of the tabernacle and the priesthood after the sacrifice was made something like Elijah laying out his sacrifice the fire of God fell upon it and ignited it is the statement of God's approval of the sacrifice. That it's not a show of something or crippled animal or something that you can afford but the best, the choice, the perfect to complete the total is a total God.

And if there's any hedging any holding back not a full giving over unto Him His fire does not fall. So the fact that the light the smoke and glory the smoke and the fire passed through the sacrifice as a flaming torch and a smoking oven is the statement of God's acceptance of Abraham's sacrifice and of his obedience and this commentator says that not only ratifies the covenant but that the fire itself is a consuming fire and the symbol of the wrath of God a judgment at some time. And I'm saying that this is at the beginning with Abraham it will be at the end with the people of Abraham both the church and the nation of Israel must

come to its final covenant union with God through judgment through fire through darkness through smoke.

Compare this with the present understanding and desire of many so-called friends of Israel that want to see the present states succeed. And just be patient in the end they go through some problems but they'll straighten out and it'll be it'll be the messianic prophetic fulfillment without the smoke without the fire without the judgment without the darkness. You know what that betrays? An inadequate knowledge of God that is bent only on the question of success and not the question of glory.

Israel's establishment is not the thing in itself it's a means to a much greater end the glory of God. And that glory always has to be shrouded and to appear and to come in clouds of darkness judgment fire wrath. That God's millennial glory of a restored earth and nations that acknowledge God comes out of the fire of his final judgment called the time of tribulation.

It begins with Israel but then goes on to affect all nations. So here the final birthing of the age of God the millennial age comes out of great judgment fire darkness. Not progressive improvement that men would like to see over a course of time that does not require these devastating things.

What a contrast between what men would like and the way that God himself brings ushers in the thing that pertains to his glory. Do you need a break? We need a break. We ask for continuing revelation of the rich truths my God that are in this chapter before us this morning.

We bless you for what you have already given and look to you my God to bring us to such conclusion now as should please you. Thanking you my God for this St. Delitzsch and Kiel these two men these scholars who wrestle through your word my God and give us the advantage of their labor we receive it as a gift to the church in Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

Well I want to give you a taste of what good exegesis is the drawing out the Greek word is drawing out of the meaning of scripture what it means to be a scholar in the world what it means to be a theologian can you think of any more wonderful occupation than to study the things pertaining to God theology and don't I know Jim makes remarks about the cemetery that a seminary often is but don't disparage biblical learning and respect the great gift that the church God has given in such manner Calvin Luther much can be said in criticism as well but giants of the faith who wrestle with original language and text and sought the meaning of God and have enriched the church thereby you see it now here as for example the question we took up at the beginning why was this given in a vision why not an

actual act and performance and he writes a vision wrought by God was not a mere fancy or subjective play of the thoughts but a spiritual fact which was not only in all respects as real as things discerned by the senses but which surpassed it in its lasting significance you just want to ha ha not only is the thought deep and precious it is expressed felicitously this is felicitous language this is where the expression matches the content where the thought spiritual thoughts with spiritual words and I'll read it again and you don't come to this cheaply this is through struggle this is through labor this is through effort this is through rewriting and rewriting until you get the statement the way you want it some of you know what we've gone through for a few of our newsletters when we had to

come up with a statement on the Toronto blessing or even now at the time of Jacob's trouble how many times was it reworked and reworked and reconsidered and altered and taken into consideration the statements until we finally felt free to publish it because once it's in print that's it you live with that and so I'm sure that these men pass through such labors so he's discussing why a vision is a vision mere fancy or

subjective play of thoughts no it's a spiritual fact which was not only in all respects as real as things discerned by the senses but which surpassed it in its lasting significance that because it is given in vision it communicates something beyond and more than what would have been understood if it had been an actual happening that vision allows for an accuracy of spiritual

statements like what we talked about the cutting in half of an animal which probably in reality could not have been performed that way but in the vision it was performed in the vision a smoking pot and a burning torch passes through the pieces in actuality paths that would not have been the mode God is wanting to say something of a spiritual kind that is more he's more able to give through vision than he would have been through fact that we are open to data that goes beyond the natural senses and is as real or more real than what the senses would confer to us and that gives us a source of data and input that is not available to mere earthlings who are limited to sensual and empirical things only things that can be seen and felt and touched this is the privilege of the saints by the spirit

that these things are intended with a lasting significance more so than acts and events that strike the eye the covenant which Jehovah made with Abram was not intended to give force to a mere agreement respecting mutual rights and obligations this isn't your little contract I'll do this and you'll do that a thing which could have been accomplished by external sacrificial transaction but it was designed to establish the purely spiritual relation of a living fellowship between God and Abram of the deep inward meaning of which nothing but a spiritual intuition and experience could give to Abraham an effective and permanent hold I'll read that again look at the way I've got this I'm showing you how to read how to extract how to mark I can't understand that anyone could read anything worth

reading without marking it I have got to mark it I've got to put it in brackets I've got to underline I've got to use my yellow marking pen to catch the key words I've got to use asterisks I've got to that gets the meaning out the words for those who didn't hear this about my visit to certain saints in Germany and I was so impressed with the quality of these saints some about five or six of them and they all seemed to have the same quality of spirituality there was a depth to them and a quality of life I said what is it that you guys have oh they said well we were all brought up in the faith by the same teacher oh I said really who was he well it was a woman and she was a simple farm woman I said what and she laid the foundation of this impressive spiritual art yes what was her key oh

they said she is a woman who said that we should study every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and we dwelt on every word and that's see we've grown up on gone with the wind and cheap novels and whatever we read in the blur to dwell on every word so listen to this statement this was not some little cheapy agreement a contract there's a deeper spiritual significance here that required it to be revealed by vision because it was designed was that so design means there was an intent by God of a particular kind that has to do with things that are lasting and enduring not just for Abraham himself as a person but all the subsequent seed of Abraham we're born out of his loins we were so to speak in his loins when this vision came we were already resident and now it has got to be brought to

consciousness it has got to be made our own so it was designed to establish the pure spiritual relation of a living fellowship between God and Abraham a living fellowship not a technical one or a contractual one or a business agreement but one by which life itself is being imparted in union covenant is union covenant is an agreement that brings into union man and woman God and Abraham it's very life it's the life that's gone out of Abraham symbolized by the dead animal that opens the life of God that is given into covenant and the union so the spiritual relationship of a living fellowship between God and Abraham of the deep inward

meaning of which nothing but a spiritual intuition and experience could give to Abraham an effective and permanent hold that somehow the depth of what covenant

means was more registered on Abraham's consciousness by the fact that it was received in vision that if he hadn't gone through the act of it in fact is what this commentator is saying so in what way did Abraham make known his faith in Jehovah that God could say to him that Abraham believed and God imputed that to him accounted that to him reckoned him as righteousness in what way did Abraham make known his faith how was that faith demonstrated and in what way did Jehovah count it to him as righteousness what a question the reply to both questions must not be sought in the New Testament but must be given or indicated in the context don't go running elsewhere look into the word that is being given right here there might be allusions to it in the New Testament as in fact there is in Romans 4

but we want to dig the essential meaning out in the place where it is given in the beginning Genesis what reply did Abraham make on receiving the promise and what did he do in consequence when God to confirm the promise declared himself to be Jehovah who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees to give him that land as a possession Abram replied Lord whereby shall I know that I shall possess it and then God directed him to fetch a heifer three years old and so on Abraham fetched the animals required arranged them as we may certainly suppose though it is not expressly stated as God had commanded him the text doesn't tell us but he says we can suppose that what Abraham did was what God commanded and exactly in the way in which it was commanded and by this readiness to perform what God

commanded him Abram gave practical proof that he believed Jehovah a moment's respectful silence what is faith what is Abrahamic faith how did God know that Abraham really believed because he did in perfect obedience what God commanded him by the readiness to perform that's more than just performing it's a state of being it's a frame of mind it's an attitude of heart that you're ready to act the moment God will show you it's the heart that says I delight to do thy will oh God it's not because I like that particular obedience whatever it is I delight to do it because it's you who are commanding it it's not what the obedience is it has not to do with our preference that we would like this or as against that whatever the will of God is we delight to do thy will we're all geared up we're ready

to go we're just waiting for the revelation of it it's a mindset it's a disposition it's faith it's not some begrudging compliance I guess I got to it's a readiness of mind that makes Abrahamic faith faith by this readiness to perform what God commanded him Abram gave a practical proof he believed Jehovah and what God did with the animals so arranged was a practical declaration on the part of Jehovah that he reckoned this faith to Abram as righteousness the significance of the divine act is summed up in verse 18 in the words on that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram on that day on these conditions on this readiness to perform the covenant was made Jehovah reckoned Abram's faith to him as righteousness by making a covenant with him by taking Abram into

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