

Through the Bible - Genesis 15-18

by Chuck Smith

In Genesis 15-18, God establishes a covenant with Abram, emphasizing faith and His role as protector and provider amidst human struggles and decisions.

Scripture: Genesis 15:1

Topics: "Faith", "Intercession"

Description

Chuck Smith explores Genesis 15-18, emphasizing God's promises to Abraham, including the assurance that He is Abraham's shield and exceeding great reward. He highlights the significance of faith, as Abraham believed God's promise of numerous descendants despite his old age, which was credited to him as righteousness. The sermon also discusses the importance of intercession, illustrated by Abraham's plea for Sodom, showcasing God's justice and mercy. Smith encourages believers to trust in God's provision and protection, reminding them that faith, not works, is the basis for righteousness.

Transcript

Now after these things (Gen 15:1)

That is, after the battle against these kings, after the meeting of Melchizedek, after the refusal of taking the reward and so forth from the king of Sodom.

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 15:1).

"The word of the LORD", this is the first time this phrase is used in the Bible. It will now be used many, many times over. But always the first usage is always interesting of a phrase. And this is the first usage of the phrase, "The word of the LORD". Later in the New Testament we find the word of the LORD being identified as Jesus Christ.

"In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:1-5) and so forth. And then "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

The word of the LORD came to Abraham in a vision. It could be that Jesus was referring to this when He said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and saw it" (John 8:56). "Word of the LORD came to Abraham in a vision."

This is the first time that the term "shield" is used or "reward" is used and it is the first time God revealed Himself as the "I am." "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." Jesus picked up this term many times in the New Testament. "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). "I am the bread of life, down from heaven" (John 6:48,50). "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11). And so many times Jesus in John's gospel used the "I am," the ego-eimi. "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). That name by which God actually revealed Himself to the nation Israel as the God who becomes whatever your need might be. I am thy shield.

Abraham, of course, had probably been thinking about the battle now that he's gone back home. Begins to really live the experiences and the excitement. It's amazing how your mind can flash back on vivid and powerful experiences and you almost relive them again. Many of the fellows who fought in some of the wars, you get home and in the middle of the night you begin to relive it. You think you're back out there. You begin to hear the sounds, the shelling. You begin to feel the tension. You begin to scream and you begin to relive the whole experience that makes such a deep impression on your mind, and you're seeking constantly while in it, you repress it. Then it has a way of working itself out later on.

Abraham was perhaps in one of these experiences where he was really again going through the feeling, the sound of the clanging shields and swords. The arrows coming, the shield going up and deflecting it and the sword flashing and the shield going up and protecting, and he perhaps was thinking, "Oh-oh, one of those kings regroup. What if they come down and they catch me by surprise? What if they invade the land and they destroy me and they take away all of my riches?"

He saw that riches were such an uncertain thing. All of the wealthy cities of the Amorites and all were destroyed. The cities of the plain had all been sacked. The wealth of Lot had been taken away. But yet in a moment, these men who had become so rich by this invasion, their riches were taken away. And he saw the uncertainty of worldly treasures and the worldly riches. He began to think, "Oh, what if they come and take away all my riches? What will I do then? What if I'm faced in an ambush and I don't have my shield? What if I'm caught by surprise?" And fear began to grip his heart because the first thing the Lord said was, "Fear not". It always indicates that he was afraid. The Lord said, "I am thy shield".

"You don't have to worry whether or not you have your shield, Abraham. I am thy shield. I am your defense. I will protect you. And you don't have to worry about your great supply. Someone sacking them and taking them off. I am thy exceeding great reward. I'm your resource. If you have Me, you've got the resources with you. You don't have to worry about the provision. You have Me. I am your exceeding great reward". So Abraham made a very wise decision in turning down the puny treasures that were offered to him by the king of Sodom for the greater wealth of God who became his exceeding great reward.

Oh, if we'd only realize if we have the Lord, we have defense. We have the protection that we need, plus also we have the provisions that we need. God wants to be to you everything you need. He wants to be your protector. He wants to be your provider. I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward.

And Abram said, Lord God (Gen 15:2),

Now this is the first time this word is used, it's Adonay, or Adonay is what it is. Actually, Lord God. The Lord signifying the--or Adonay Jehovah is what he's saying. Lord God, notice the God is in all capitals. That's indicating that this now is a translation of that Hebrew word Jehovah, which is a word filled with mystic glory and beauty. Adonay is a title of Lord. And so it is capital "L" and small "o-r-d". The Adonay, the first use of Adonay in the scriptures. The term which is a title that signifies relationship immediately.

Abraham is placing himself in the position of the servant. When he calls him by Adonay, it's a term of relationship. It is Lord in relationship of master. And it can be applied to deity or to man. Abraham was the lord over his servants. When it applies to man, the word is spelled with a small "l". When it is applied to God, it is spelled with a large "L" in our text to help us to understand.

Actually Sarah later on called Abraham lord. It is a term of respect as it indicates relationship, and in the New Testament it is--it's equivalent, of course, is found in the Greek "Kurios" as refers to Jesus, the Lord Kurios, Jesus Christ. Now because it is a term of relationship, Jesus one time said, Why callest thou me Kurios, Kurios? Why do you call me Lord, Lord; and yet you don't do the things I command you? That's inconsistent. That's wrong. You're using a title but you're only using it as a name, it isn't a reality. I'm not truly your Lord.

Many people are using the title, "Oh, Lord," "good Lord," you know and all, and they use it only as a name but not really indicating a relationship. It is a name that should indicate relationship. It's a beautiful, and not name, but a title that indicates relationship. And His title, as far as I'm concerned is the Lord Jesus Christ. His name is Jesus Christ but His title and my relationship, He is my Lord and I want to submit my life totally and completely unto Him.

Now Abraham said Adonay, Jehovah, Lord God.

what will you give me (Gen 15:2),

Lord said I'm your great reward. You've just turned down all of the loot, you know, that you had captured from these kings. And so "I am your great reward," he says, What are you going to give me.

seeing I have no child, and the steward of my house is Eliezer of Damascus (Gen 15:2)?

So his chief servant was Eliezer and without any children, Eliezer actually at Abraham's death becomes the heir of all of Abraham's good. So what are you going to give me? Anything I have is going to go to Eliezer; he's not even my own son. So You are my great reward. Great, but I don't own anything and if you did give me anything, it's going to, you know, I don't have any child. I don't have anyone to pass it on to. It's interesting how that when you get up into the later years, you don't begin, you begin not to think so much for yourself but for what you can pass on to your children. And so you're not so much laying up for the rainy day as you're just trying to set things up so that your children can have a little easier than you had, if possible.

So what are you going to give me seeing I don't have any child? And Eliezer, this guy from Damascus, is the heir of all that is in my house.

You've given me no child: no one born in my house who is my heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD (Gen 15:3-4)

Again, the term the word of the LORD.

came unto him, saying, This [that is, Eliezer] shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and he said, Look now toward the heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be (Gen 15:4-5).

Earlier He said, "As the dust of the earth." Now look at the stars, see if you can number them: So shall thy seed be." And that famous verse quoted by Paul, James.

And he believed in the LORD; and he [that is, the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6).

God made a wild promise to him. Abraham is eighty-five years old. God said, "I'm going to make your seed like the stars of heaven, you can't count them". And "Abraham believed the promise of God." As far-fetched as it might have appeared at this point, "And God accounted his faith for righteousness." And that is why Abraham is called the father of those that believe because our righteousness tonight is imputed to us by our believing the promise of God in Jesus Christ. That Jesus died for our sins and took our iniquities in His own life, in His own body, died in our place and as we believe the promise of God, God accounts our believing in Jesus for righteousness.

He doesn't account my works for righteousness. He doesn't account my prayers for righteousness. He doesn't account my study of the word for righteousness. He doesn't account my diligence or sincerity for righteousness. He accounts my believing for righteousness. That's great because many times, my works are horrible. They're negative. Many times I'm a total failure in my devotions. He doesn't count that against me. He counts my believing for righteousness.

So Paul the apostle speaks of his own experience of righteousness by the law which was perfect. And the "righteousness which is according to the law, blameless. And yet that which was gain to me, I counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ: for whom I suffer the loss of all things, and count them but refuse, that I may know him. And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of Christ through faith" (Philippians 3:6-9). Believing and God accounting my believing for righteousness.

Here's where it all began with Abraham. Abraham believed God. God said I'm going to make your seed like the stars, you can't number them. All right, far out. He believed God and God said, All right, you're a righteous man. He accounted that faith for righteousness. Now it's a good thing because Abraham's works weren't always the finest, either. He did some pretty shoddy things after this. But yet it was the basic believing in the promise.

And we'll point out to you in a little bit, that that believing wasn't always as strong and powerful as it should be because a lot of times Satan comes saying, "Hey, yeah but look, you've--you've really failed in your faith a lot of times, brother. You know, your faith has been weak. You tried other things and he begins to show you that your faith isn't really so perfect. So if he counts faith for righteousness maybe you're going to be kicked out too because your faith hasn't always been steady and strong. Well, neither was Abraham's. And yet God took and accounted his faith for righteousness. We'll get to some of the failures of faith in just a little bit.

And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God (Gen 15:7-8),

Again, Adonay Jehovah.

whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it (Gen 15:8)?

What kind of a sign?

And he said unto him, Take a heifer three years old, and a she goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took them all, and he divided them in the midst, he cut them in two and he laid each piece one against another, side by side: but the birds he didn't divide (Gen 15:9-10).

In other words, he left them whole.

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

The vultures began to come down and descend and Abraham was driving them off.

And when the sun was going down (Gen 15:12),

Abraham was tired driving off the vultures from these pieces of the carcasses that he had set out there.

and a deep sleep fell on Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. And the Lord said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years (Gen 15:12-13);

Now "they shall afflict them four hundred years" does not necessarily imply that they would be four hundred years in Egypt. It is God telling him they're going to go down into a strange land. They're going to go down the land of Egypt but they will be afflicted four hundred years.

Now whether or not the--in Galatians the third chapter tells us that the four hundred years which is a round figure, four hundred and thirty years from the time that God made this promise to Abraham, it was four hundred and thirty years from this time unto the Mount Sinai, to their coming out of Egypt. Which meant that the sojourn, which was for four generations in Egypt was not a four hundred-year sojourn in Egypt but about a two hundred and fifteen-year sojourn in Egypt. But they were to be afflicted by the people roundabout them until God would bring them out and bring them into their own land and they would have their own place to dwell.

And so rather than a four hundred and thirty-year sojourn in Egypt, total time in Egypt, it was from the time that the covenant was made with Abraham here at this time. So it makes the Egypt sojourn only about two hundred and fifteen years, four generations.

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

Now here's interesting prophecy because they did go down to Egypt. God did judge Egypt. When they came out of Egypt, they really looted the Egyptians. They came out with great substance. They borrowed all the jewelry and all from their masters in Egypt and then they took off which was really sort of back payment for their slavery.

And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; and thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation (Gen 15:15-16)

That is, having gone down into Egypt.

they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full (Gen 15:16).

In other words, the area where they were living it was not yet full. The iniquity wasn't to be fully judged yet.

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. 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, to the river Euphrates: the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaims, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites (Gen 15:17-21).

Now they never did conquer this much land. God promised to Abraham, to his seed, the land all the way to the Nile River, Euphrates River, and to the Mediterranean. So much broader area than what they have ever captured. Now this was a very interesting and strange experience. These carcasses, driving off the birds, the prophecy of the Lord of the horror of the great darkness which was the time that they, that his descendants would be the slaves in Egypt. And then the smoking furnace, the burning lamp that passed between those pieces and the covenant of the Lord with Abraham. It's a very interesting chapter that is deserving much study.

Chapter 16

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai (Gen 16:1-2).

It's a mistake. Not always is it a mistake to hearken unto the voice of your wife but this is the second time it speaks of a man hearkening to the voice of his wife and both of them at this point were mistakes. Now there will be other times when God will say, "Listen to Sarai and hearken unto the voice of Sarai thy wife".

Now Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan (Gen 16:3),

So Abraham was eighty-five years old.

and gave he her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, she began to despise Sarai (Gen 16:3-4).

The barrenness, you know, you can always say, "Well, maybe the husband is unable to have children. Maybe there's something defective with him". But when Hagar conceived so readily, obviously now it is Sarai who is barren, the curse of barrenness in that culture and so Hagar despised Sarai.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid unto thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: and the LORD judge between me and thee. Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in your hand; do to her as whatever you please. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of

water [The angel of Jehovah found her by the fountain of water] in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur (Gen 16:5-7).

Hagar was running back to Egypt. She was getting out of there and going to go back home. But man, to get back home she had to go through that horrible wilderness area. She surely would have perished in trying to return to Egypt. And so she was by this fountain of water.

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, where did you come from? Where you going? She said, I'm fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. The angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands (Gen 16:8-9).

Now she actually at this, she was in wrong in despising Sarai and the Lord is telling her now to return and submit.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, thou shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; which means God shall hear and because the LORD hath heard thy affliction (Gen 16:10-11).

So she was probably crying there by the fountain and God heard her cry and He said call your son Ishmael, which means, "the Lord will hear". God will hear.

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he will dwell in the presence of all his brothers. And she called the name of the LORD that spoke unto her, Thou God seest me: and so she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; which is between Kadesh and Bered (Gen 16:12-14).

So she had made pretty good way down into the desert to Sinai there going near Kadesh. The name of the well is "the well of him that lives and sees me." Beerlahairoi. Beer is well, the well of him that lives and sees me.

And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And Abram was eighty-six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram (Gen 16:15-16).

Chapter 17

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old (Gen 17:1),

So this is another thirteen years later.

the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am Almighty God (Gen 17:1);

El Shaddai. So here is the first term use of the term Almighty God, El Shaddai.

walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly (Gen 17:1-2).

Now we passed over the sixteenth chapter but let me point out that at this point, Abraham and Sarai were trying to help God out. God promised He's going to bless Abraham, make his seed like the stars of the heaven, can't count them. And so Sarai comes with an alternate plan. Hey, Abraham, you know, looks like we're not going to make it, I'm getting so old and all, why don't you just take my handmaid at this point and

you know, raise up a son through her and all.

And it was really a lapse of faith in the promise of God. So Abraham's faith was not a perfect faith. It wasn't a--he wasn't a perfect man. His faith wasn't complete. So don't worry if your faith is not complete. Don't let Satan hassle you. Believing in Jesus Christ is really the important thing.

"I'll make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly."

And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of many nations. Neither shall thy name be called any more Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham (Gen 17:3-5);

Rather than high father, father of many nations, Abraham.

for the father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Gen 17:5-8).

God is now repeating the promise of giving him a large number of descendants and of giving to them this land forever. It's theirs. It belongs to them.

And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between you and me and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised (Gen 17:9-10).

And so here is where God established the rite of circumcision, which became, of course, the most important rite as far as the Jews were concerned. It is a badge and a mark of the people that have been separated unto God. And the spiritual significance is that of people who have cut off the fleshly life and are living after the Spirit. Now they made the mistake, as people so often do, concerning rituals as identifying the ritual for the reality.

The reality is a matter of heart. God wanted a people that were separated from their flesh in their heart. People who were spiritual and spiritually minded who would serve God in the Spirit. It was to be symbolized by the cutting away of the flesh. But it was really a spiritual thing that God was seeking people who would cut away the fleshly mind and the fleshly heart and would serve God in the Spirit. But they began to identify the physical rite for the reality of the experience of the heart and thus made the physical rite totally meaningless.

So if you would go through the rite of circumcision and yet still within your heart were living after your flesh, walking after the flesh, the fact that you had gone through the rite meant nothing. Now if you had gone through the cutting away of the flesh in the heart, then again the rite meant nothing. For God was really searching for the heart and the work in the heart. Same with baptism in the church.

For many it's become a meaningless rite. They think, "Well, the important thing is go down and be baptized". Baptism doesn't save you. Not that that is the washing away of the filth of the flesh. You can go down and be baptized a dozen times and not be saved. The rite of baptism doesn't save. It's the inward work of the Spirit within your heart that really counts.

And so here God established an outward rite which was to speak of an inward experience, the cutting away of the fleshly heart, the heart after the flesh and it was to be God desired that people whose heart was after the Spirit and after Him. And so here is where the rite was established and God ordered it for all of His children, all that were in his house, all of the servants, all of those that have been brought into the house of Abraham. It was something that was to be done unto Abraham and to his descendants after him on the eighth day of the male child. The rite of circumcision was to be fulfilled.

And God said to Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be (Gen 17:15).

So it's like change in her name. Name Sarah means princess. That's a good name for a wife, fellows. You might start calling your wife Princess. It's a beautiful name.

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yes, I will bless her, and she shall be the mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her (Gen 17:16).

Here is God saying, Hey, I'm going to bless her. I'm going to make her the mother.

And Abraham fell on his face, and he laughed (Gen 17:17),

Now his was not a laugh of incredulity, his was a laugh of excitement. All right, you know, and it was just laughter of joy for this promise of God. Now later on, Sarah laughed but hers was a laugh of incredulity. Ah, you know, me? An old woman? Shall I have the joy of bearing a child? And she laughed because it seems so incredulous.

And so the Lord rebuked her. Why did Sarah laugh? Oh, I didn't laugh. Oh yes, you did. So Abraham laughed out of just the sheer joy of the whole thing and she laughed because it seems so incredulous. So it's only right that when the child is born that they should name him Laughter. Isaac, it means laughter. It's a very fitting name because they both laughed at the prospect of in this age of life, having a son.

And so Abraham fell on his face and laughed

and he said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God (Gen 17:17-18),

Now this is sort of a lapse in faith.

O that Ishmael might live before thee (Gen 17:18)!

In other words, Oh God, forget it. You know, Sarah is ninety and I'm a hundred. Just, that's all right, Lord. Let Ishmael, thirteen years old now, let him live before you.

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac, [Laughter]: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him (Gen 17:19).

So that Ishmael was not to be the recipient of this covenant and of the land but rather Isaac. So in reality the land does not belong to the Arabs by the covenant of God, it belongs with the descendants of Isaac.

As for Ishmael, I've heard thee (Gen 17:20):

You said let Ishmael live before you. All right.

I have blessed him, I will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto you at this set time next year. And the Lord left off talking with him, and God went from Abraham. And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house (Gen 17:20-23),

And they went ahead and followed the command of God in the rite of circumcision.

Abraham was ninety-nine years old, when they went through this rite (Gen 17:24).

Chapter 18

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day (Gen 18:1);

And it can get awfully hot.

And he lifted up his eyes and he looked, and, behold, there were three men who stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and he bowed himself down toward the ground, and he said, My Lord, Adonay, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort you in your hearts; and after that ye shall pass on: for therefore you are come to your servant. And they said, Do so, as you have said (Gen 18:2-5).

So the Lord was coming with two angels passing through. Abraham ran up to meet them. So really, tremendous hospitality to them. Let me get some water. Wash your feet. Let me get you something to eat. Rest awhile under the tent. It's a hot part of the day. And then continue on your journey.

In Hebrews we are told to be careful to entertain strangers. We never know but what we might be entertaining angels unaware.

Abraham hastened to make into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make quickly three measures of fine meal, and knead it, make some cakes upon the hearth (Gen 18:6).

Some good old pita bread.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and he fetched a calf that was tender and good, and he gave it to the young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which they had dressed, and he set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat (Gen 18:7-8).

Now here's an interesting thing to me. He gave them butter and milk and meat. That's not kosher. Here's Abraham, the father of Israel not being kosher. Now the kosher law of not having milk products with meat is not a proper interpretation of the scriptures. It is one of those "straining at a gnat" things that the Pharisees loved to do. The law did declare thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk. In other words, you're not to take a little goat and boil it in its mother's milk, cooking it in its own mother's milk. It was just not the right thing to do.

But the Jews have taken that as a kosher prohibition of having dairy products with meat products. Because you see, if you drink a glass of milk and you eat a steak, you don't know but that steak may have

come from the calf of the mother cow from whom you drank the milk, and in your stomach it's going to seethe in that milk. And so you're seething a kid in its mother's milk. And so to be careful that you don't do that, they'll not eat cheese or any dairy products with any meat products unless the meat product be a fish. Kosher law. But it's straining at things. It's not what God intended at all. Here's Abraham being very un-kosher. And the angels were, too, because they ate it.

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah your wife? He said, She's in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it (Gen 18:9-10),

She was staying in the tent door eavesdropping on what the man was saying out there. She was behind the tent door, you know, listening and

Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women (Gen 18:11).

She's gotten through the change of life.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am so old shall I have the pleasure, my lord being old also (Gen 18:12)?

Calling Abraham her husband lord.

And the LORD said unto Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Surely I of a surety bear a child, shall I of surety bear a child when I'm so old? Is any thing too hard for Jehovah (Gen 18:13-14)?

Oh, what a neat question, isn't it? God said to Abraham, Behold I am God, "Is there anything too hard for me?" Paul tells us, "Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Is there anything too hard for God? Why did Sarah laugh? Is there anything too hard for God? Why did Sarah laugh? Because she was looking at only the human possibilities. She wasn't looking at God.

It is oftentimes that we laugh at something that seems so incredible because we are only looking at the human aspects rather than looking to God Who's able to set aside human laws and human kind of restrictions or prohibitions. So she's gone through the change of life. So he's over a hundred years old. So what? Is there anything too hard for God? Why did Sarah laugh?

At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. And Sarah denied, saying, I didn't laugh; for she was afraid. And he said, Oh; but you did laugh. And the men rose from thence, and they looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on their way (Gen 18:14-16).

So Abraham started walking with them a bit.

And the LORD (Gen 18:17)

Now here is interesting. And the word LORD here is Jehovah, "And Jehovah."

said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do (Gen 18:17);

Now there were three who appeared as angels but one of them was Jehovah Who, of course, would have been Jesus Christ, one of the theophanies or manifestations of Jesus Christ and this is what Jesus was probably referring to. It could have been Melchizedek. This is what He was probably referring to when He said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day and saw it." Now here is Abraham talking directly with Jehovah, but not with the Father.

"No man has seen the Father at any time; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath manifested him or made him known" (John 1:18). So this is one of the manifestations of God in the Old Testament. It is not the Father; no man has seen the Father, Jesus said, at any time. So this would be the manifestation of Jesus Christ in and as Jehovah because the name Jesus itself is Jehovah Shuah and His name in the millennium will be Jehovah Tsidkenu. And so He is manifesting and appearing here as Jehovah, talking directly to Abraham. "And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do."

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment; that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. And Jehovah said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and they went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before Jehovah. And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right (Gen 18:18-25)?

Now notice Abraham as he begins to intercede with Jehovah for the city of Sodom. What is the premise? It would not be right or fair or just for God to destroy the righteous with the wicked. If God's judgment is going to come upon the place, then the righteous should not share with the wicked in that judgment. If the judgment is coming for the wickedness of the people, then it would not be right for God to judge the righteous along with the wicked. That's the whole premise of his argument. And the basis for it is, "Shall not the judge of the earth do right?" It isn't fair that these righteous people should all to suffer the same penalty, the same judgment as the wicked are suffering. Would you judge the righteous with the wicked?

Now that is a very important point. And Peter picked it up in his epistle. And he speaks about how God delivered that righteous man Job who was vexed by the ways of people who were living around him. That righteous man who was vexed by the manner of life of those around him. "For God knows how to deliver the righteous, but to reserve the ungodly for the Day of Judgment" (2 Peter 2:9).

Now I bring that out because there's a lot of people who are seeking to adhere to a post-Tribulationist view. And what is the post-Tribulationist telling you? That God is going to be unfair. He is going to judge the righteous with the wicked. That the church is going to have to go through this great time of God's judgment and God's wrath being poured out upon the earth. And the very opposite premise from which Abraham was coming is being declared by these people as they declare that the church will have to go through the Great Tribulation and suffer with the wicked. That judgment and the wrath of God which is to be poured out against the wickedness of those who are dwelling upon the earth.

They are declaring that God is not just or God is not fair because Abraham's whole premise is this would not be fair, this would not be right to destroy the righteous with the wicked. "Shall not the Judge of the earth be right or do right?"

And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, I will spare the place for their sakes (Gen 18:26).

Now notice how few people it takes to forestall the judgment of God. God is so patient. If in this whole city there are fifty righteous people, the hand of judgment will be withheld. God does not delight in judgment. God delights in mercy. And just a few righteous people can be a saving influence in a whole community of wickedness. Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). And so God has you as a saving influence, as a savory influence in the community. And it doesn't take many; just a few can withhold the judgment of God.

Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord [Adonay here], which am but dust and ashes (Gen 18:27):

Hey, I'm just dust and ashes but I have, I'm actually taking upon myself to talk to God.

Peradventure what if there is only five less from the fifty: will you destroy the city because you're just lacking five? The Lord said, If there are forty-five, I'll not destroy it. He spake to him again, he said, Peradventure there will only be forty found there. And he said, I'll not destroy it for forty. Oh, don't be angry with me, I'm going to speak: What again what if there is just thirty righteous there. He said, I'll not destroy it for thirty. What if perhaps there's only twenty? I'll not destroy it for twenty (Gen 18:28-31).

Make the best deal you can.

And he said, Oh don't be angry with me, I'm going to speak but one more time: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake (Gen 18:32).

Abraham thought surely I can find ten. There's Lot, his two sons, and his daughters, and families, all right you know. This is an interesting picture of intercession. Abraham standing, interceding for these people, for this city of which the judgment of God is about to fall. Beautiful picture of intercession.

And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned to his place (Gen 18:33).

So two weeks, we'll find out what happened to Sodom. Oh, you're supposed to read ahead anyhow. Next five chapters. The beautiful picture of intercession. But the principle is the thing I wanted to point out. The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous. Of course, you know they didn't find ten. They found one righteous man.

Now one thing I want to point out when the judgment came, he went to his children and he begged them to leave, but they laughed at him. They mocked him. Oh, God's not going to judge this place. This has been going on for a long time. Though he, Lot himself, was able to escape the pollutions, his children were not, and his move to Sodom cost him his family. He was strong even. He withheld against the vileness and pollution of the area, but his children could not withstand and he lost his children through the move. Very tragic indeed. They fell into the culture and sin of Sodom and were destroyed.

But getting back to the principle, will God destroy the righteous with the wicked, and the answer of God was negative. No, He would not destroy the righteous with the wicked. So what did God do to the righteous man before he destroyed the wicked? He led that righteous Lot out before He destroyed the city. Even before the wrath and the judgment of God will come upon the earth, He will lead the righteous out. For the Lord knoweth how to deliver the righteous, but to reserve the ungodly for the day of judgment. The Day of Judgment is coming upon the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, but it would not be fair for the God of the earth to destroy the righteous with the wicked.

I consider the post-tribulationists' view as being inconsistent with the very nature of the loving righteous God. And the rapture totally consistent with His righteous nature and with the history of delivering the righteous out before the judgment came.

We'll get into that more as we press on. Shall we stand?

Now may the Lord be with you, bless you and keep you. May the Lord cause His face to shine upon you and give you peace. May your heart be filled with his love. May you walk in the Spirit and may you be strengthened by the work of His Holy Spirit in your inner man. May you be increased in knowledge and understanding of His Word and of His will and of His purposes for your life that you might walk before the Lord in a way that is pleasing unto Him. And may God increase your faith and your trust. May He work in your life in a very beautiful way as He nurtures you and as He leads you into that path of fellowship with Himself. May your life be enriched in all things in Christ Jesus.

And may the Lord and the blessings of the Lord be upon you while we are absent from each other until we are brought back together again to continue our fellowship and our growing together in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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