

## **Genesis 15:9-21**

Abram's determination to live a separated life had cost him a great deal.

He had allowed Lot to choose the fertile plain of Jordan where great prosperity, but great wickedness, dwelt.

He had refused the richness of Sodom in order to keep himself free of the world's entanglements.

Yes, he would follow God rather than earthly riches, and would prove in his own life that heaven's gain surpasses earth's merged treasure.

Genesis 15:1 **"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am**

**thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."**

As we noted in last week's lesson, the little phrase "**the word**" probably indicated the pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.

It is the first time that these words are found in scripture.

In fact, there are a lot of *firsts* in this verse.

It is the first appearance of the words "**vision,**" "**shield,**" "**reward,**" and very significantly, it is the first appearance of the great *I AMs* of the Bible.

**"I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."**

As we all know, many of the claims of Christ begin with the words **"I am."**

- **"I am the light of the world"**
- **"I am the way, the truth, and the life"**
- **"I am the door"**
- **"I am Alpha and Omega"**
- **"I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."**

So when we read **"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield---**" it takes no great stretch of the imagination to realize that Abram actually saw a vision of the Christ.

Also V 6, which comes near the end of this conversation, says, **"And he believed in the LORD"**--not just what the Lord had said, but **"---he believed in the LORD;**

**and he counted it to him for  
righteousness."**

Yes, Abram's righteousness was founded upon  
the same foundation that the  
Christian's is today, namely, the Lord  
Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin.

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However, even though **"he believed in the  
LORD,"** he still had a question.

V 7-8 **"And he said unto him, I am the LORD  
that brought thee out of Ur of the  
Chaldees, to give thee this land to  
inherit it.**

**<sup>8</sup> And he said, LORD God, whereby  
shall I know that I shall inherit it?"**

Abram was asking for a sign.

So in answer to this request, God graciously  
opened up to his understanding the  
history of his descendants for a period

of 400 years, and even confirmed their future possession of Canaan with a covenant.

V 9-10 **"And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.**

<sup>10</sup> **And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not."**

No doubt Abram would immediately recognize this as the preparations necessary to seal a covenant.

Yes, in his day, when a binding agreement was required, an animal was divided in the middle, and the two parties

involved in the covenant would walk between the pieces to seal the bargain. There is one incidence recorded in scripture of this type of thing being done.

Israel had made such a covenant with Jehovah, and then, unfortunately, they broke it.

We find God's reaction to their unfaithfulness recorded in Jeremiah 34: 18-19 **"And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,**

<sup>19</sup> **The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of**

the calf;

20 I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth."

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So Abram would be quite aware that he was making preparations for the sealing of a covenant.

However, in this case, there was more than one animal involved.

In fact, there were no less than five animals sacrificed at that time.

I have used the word *sacrificed* here because even though they were not actually offered upon an altar, they were sacrificed.

Yes, they gave their lives and shed their blood to establish the legitimacy of this promise.

It was a great sacrifice to seal a great covenant.

It was a covenant for a people that would provide the first step in God's plan of redemption.

Yes, through that nation, God would make His great sacrifice in the person of His only begotten Son.

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So five animals were required, and each one was fully qualified, even under the Levitical requirements that would be established later on.

There was the cow, the sheep, the goat, the pigeon, and the turtledove.



Their lives were sacrificed for a covenant that would guarantee the Promised Land to Israel.

This covenant was exclusively for Israel, but it also foreshadowed another covenant, a covenant involving the greatest sacrifice the world has ever known, and one that would ensure a Heavenly Canaan for Abram's spiritual seed.

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It is generally agreed that all of the Old Testament sacrifices speak of Jesus Christ.

However, there was one occasion in Israel's history when the sacrifice actually pictured the nation of Israel.

The situation was like this.

The Philistines were about to overwhelm Israel and destroy them in battle. So in great desperation, the nation gathered together before the Lord, and Samuel offered a sacrifice and prayed for their deliverance.

That day, Samuel did something that was quite significant.

He offered a "**sucking lamb**" as the sacrifice.

This helpless *baby lamb* pictured the nation of Israel as a helpless people, which, indeed, they were at that particular time.

Let's read about this most unusual event in 1 Samuel 7:7-10 **"And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines**

went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

<sup>8</sup> And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

<sup>9</sup> And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

<sup>10</sup> And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel."

It was one of those rare occasions when the sacrifice did not speak directly of Jesus Christ, but rather pictured God's chosen people.

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So in this portion before us today, not only were these animals a required sacrifice to accomplish this covenant, and not only did they foreshadow the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but they also picture for us the nature and experiences of Abram's seed, both earthly and heavenly.

Right away we notice that the first two sacrifices were female, that is the heifer, and the she goat.

Scripture indicates that the woman is the weaker vessel, and as such she should be honoured and protected by man.

So here the use of females in the sacrifices rather than the usual use of males indicates the dependency of Abram's earthly seed on their God.

Yes, all through their history, Israel has been dependent upon Jehovah for protection from the surrounding nations.

And, of course, this is ever true of Abram's heavenly seed, the bride of Christ, who is under the protection of Jesus.

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Then there was the pigeon and the turtledove.

In the Levitical order that would come later, these birds were the sacrifice of the poor.

If you were too poor to bring a lamb, then the birds were an acceptable substitute.

Leviticus 12:8 **"And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean."**

God has always accommodated the poor in his plans.

For instance, the shepherds were the only *invited* guests to Christ's birth.

And Mary and Joseph were a godly, poor couple.

We know that because they needed to offer these birds after Jesus' birth.

Luke 2:22-24 "And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

<sup>23</sup> (As it is written in the law of the LORD, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

<sup>24</sup> And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

So the two birds that Abram offered reminds us of the fact that the church, for the most part, would be made up of the poor and humble of this earth.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many

mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence."

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Of course, Abram would not understand all this symbolism.

However, on the day that he laid out these animals, he would certainly understand that God was preparing to make a *covenant* by sacrifice.



V 10-11 "And he took unto him all these,  
and divided them in the midst, and laid  
each piece one against another: but the  
birds divided he not.

<sup>11</sup> And when the fowls came down upon  
the carcasses, Abram drove them away."

Abram had faithfully made the preparations  
that God had commanded.

However, after waiting all day, nothing had  
happened.

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Probably this long delay indicated that this  
covenant would take a long time in its  
fulfillment.

And that was certainly true.

The promise of a son would only be fulfilled  
after a lifetime of waiting.

It would take many years for Israel to become a nation and possess the Promised Land.

And God's promise that **"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"** would only be fulfilled in Christ after many centuries had gone by.

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So Abram waited, and while he waited, he protected the sacrifices.

V 11 **"And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away."**

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Satan has always attempted to thwart God's covenant plans.

Through Pharaoh, he tried to destroy the nation of Israel by killing all the male babies.

By destroying Israel, he thought he could destroy God's plan to send the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

Also, working through King Herod, he killed all the babies in Bethlehem from two years and under in an attempt to destroy Jesus Christ while He was just a baby.

And, of course, in Satan's master plan to eliminate God's Son, he engineered, or thought he engineered, the crucifixion of Christ.

It was the only plan that worked, because in reality, it was *God's* plan.

Yes, "**the fowls came down**" to destroy God's covenant, but "**Abram drove them away.**"

And Satan wants to destroy God's plan in our lives also, so we, like Abram, must be alert.

1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

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V 12-16 "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

<sup>13</sup> And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

<sup>14</sup> And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

<sup>15</sup> And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good

old age.

<sup>16</sup> But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

This revelation was not all *good* news.

God had opened Abram's understanding, and showed him the history of Israel right up to the time they exited Egypt.

Abram had experienced "**an horror of great darkness,**" no doubt preparing him for this dark revelation ahead.

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V 15 "**And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.**"

Abram would never personally inherit the land of Canaan.

He would be a stranger and a pilgrim in the  
earth all his days.

But also, he would never see the bondage of  
Egypt.

He would always be a free man, and He would  
go to his **"fathers in peace."**

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After his death, his descendants, just  
seventy souls, would leave the Promised  
Land, but this time at God's command.

However, 400 years later, the children of  
Israel, now a nation, would be back in  
Canaan again, this time as the  
possessors of the land.

They would have come full circle, returning  
to the land that their fathers had  
lived in as strangers and pilgrims.

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But why did it take so long for Israel to possess Canaan?

Well, besides the fact that God was building a nation, he was also extending His mercy to the inhabitants of Canaan.

The Amorites had not as yet sunken as deeply into sin as their neighbours.

So, as God had given the Antediluvian race 120 years to repent, He now held back the judgment of Canaan for 400 years.

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

But, like the Antediluvians, the Amorites continued on in their sins, secure in their own wickedness, while God prepared a nation to judge them.

Just because God delays judgment does not mean that He is unable to judge.

That is a mistake that men often make.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 **"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."**

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Abram had prepared and protected the animals, and it was now time to finalize the covenant.

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

Abram knew that the two parties involved in a covenant were to pass between the sacrificial animals, and he also



realized that he had not been called upon to participate.

This immediately gives stability to the covenant, for the faithfulness of man was neither called upon nor required in this agreement.

So then, who were the participants?

Verse 17 tells us it was **"a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces."**

Some commentators believe that the **"smoking furnace"** spoke of God the Father, and, indeed, the Almighty is a consuming fire--Deuteronomy 4:24 **"For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."**

And the burning lamp pictures Jesus Christ, **"the light of the world."**

So this covenant, unlike the law that came later and was conditional upon man's obedience, was all of God, and so could not fail.

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And just as the sacrifices foreshadowed Israel and the church, as well as Christ, so the "**smoking furnace**" and the "**burning lamp**," although speaking primarily of the Father and the Son, also foreshadow Israel's history.

In the "**smoking furnace**," we see their trials while in Egypt.

Deuteronomy 4:20    "**But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.**"

Yes, God was always their light, their  
    **"burning lamp,"** bringing comfort in  
affliction, and deliverance from  
trouble.

In fact, God sent Moses for that express  
purpose.

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And, in all the smoking furnaces of their  
experience, there was always the  
    **"burning lamp."**

After God had given them the good land, they  
forsook Him, and were overwhelmed by  
the enemy.

However, when they repented, God raised up  
judges time and again to deliver them.

And when they were carried to Babylon, God  
caused Cyrus, a pagan king, to make a  
decree to return them to the Promised  
Land again.

And even in the great tribulation, the greatest "**smoking furnace**" of all time, the "**burning lamp**" will appear to deliver His people Israel.

Mark 13:24-27    "**But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,**

<sup>25</sup>    **And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.**

<sup>26</sup>    **And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.**

<sup>27</sup>    **And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."**

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After this little detour, I think it's time  
to get back to Genesis 15.

V 17-21 "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.

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

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the  
Kadmonites,

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites,  
and the Rephaims,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites,  
and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

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Notice the words in V 18: **"Unto thy seed  
have I given this land."**

Yes, it was a done deal.

Previously, in Genesis 12:7, God had said

**"Unto thy seed will I give this land."**

Again in Genesis 13:15, God said, **"For  
all the land which thou seest, to thee  
will I give it."** But now that the

**"smoking furnace, and a burning lamp"**

had **"passed between those pieces,"** God  
could say **"Unto thy seed have I given  
this land."**

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And, as is customary in any legal  
transactions, the details were read  
out.

Not only were the boundaries given, but the  
nations that would be disinherited were  
named, as we saw in verses 19-21.

As we know, it would be several hundred years before Israel actually possessed the land.

Nevertheless, on the very day that God sealed the contract before Abram, Israel held the title deeds to Canaan. Yes, it was a done deal, and all the suicide bombers in the world can never change that fact.

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Today, Israel does not occupy nearly all the land that they legally own, according to this covenant.

You will notice that V18 sets out the boundaries as being "**from the river of Egypt** (which is, of course, the Nile) **unto the great river, the river Euphrates.**"

Because of a lack of faith, they were very slow in taking the land, and because of sin, they were very quick in losing it again.

However, under the reign of King Solomon, both of God's promises to Abram came to fruition.

They were as **"the sand which is upon the sea shore"** for multitude, and they ruled over all the Promised Land.

We looked at these verses last week.

1 Kings 4:20-21 **"Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.**

<sup>21</sup> **And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and**



**served Solomon all the days of his  
life."**

And someday, when their Messiah returns,  
they will possess all of that land  
again.

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Before we leave this section, I would like  
to point out the striking similarities  
between the earthly seed and the  
heavenly seed.

First of all we noted that Israel's covenant  
did not depend upon man's  
participation.

Likewise the covenant of grace is founded  
upon the Godhead.

Ephesians 2:8-9 **"For by grace are ye saved  
through faith; and that not of  
yourselves: it is the gift of God:**

**9: Not of works, lest any man should boast."**

Then we saw that Israel became the possessor of Canaan on the very day that the **"smoking furnace, and a burning lamp"--**  
**"passed between those pieces,"** even though they did not even exist at that time.

God no longer said **"to thee will I give it",** but rather **"Unto thy seed have I given this land."**

It was a covenant sealed in heaven that could *not* be altered.

Likewise the covenant of grace was settled in heaven even before the first sinner was born.

Ephesians 1:3 **"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the**

**world, that we should be holy and  
without blame before him, in love--."**

And, just as the covenant to Israel was sealed by sacrifice, so God's promise to the heavenly seed stands upon Christ's sacrifice.

1 Peter 1:17-20 **"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;**

**<sup>19</sup> But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:**

**<sup>20</sup> Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."**

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What a wonderful work of grace!

As we contemplate these two covenants, we can only stand in awe of our Heavenly Father and exclaim---"**O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!**"