## **GENESIS 15 - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

## RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FATH - <u>(SERMON MP3)</u>

Abram chose to resist the temptation of Sodom's riches in both chapters 13 and 14 of Gen.. In response, he received another vision of the Lord. God told Abram not to be afraid (Gen. 15:1).

- When you resist the hook-laden offers of the world, what natural fears do people like you and me face (Gen. 15:1)? What kind of questions linger in the back of our minds when we say "no" to the world (Gen. 14:21-24)?
- Reflect on what the Lord said about Himself in (Gen. 15:1). He would be Abram's \_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. What did each statement mean?
- What implications should it have had on Abram's actions earlier in his life? Consider how God as a shield would have impacted Abram in (Gen. 12:12, 17; 14:20). Consider how God as a rewarder would have impacted Abram in (Gen. 13:12; 14:22-23).
- Now, what implications should this revelation of God have on your life? How have you said, "no thanks" to the offers of the world in favor of God's reward? Is the Lord your shield (Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 84:11-12) and rewarder (Hebrews 11:6)? What difference does that make in your life? Be prepared to share an example with your discussion group.

In (Gen. 15:2), Abram asks God a question about his heir. Can you really blame him for that? What do you do when you don't see God's work moving forward according to his promises? Sometimes we wonder if we are supposed to act instead of wait. We waver between hoping for a supernatural miracle and expecting a "normal," realistic alternative. An infertile couple might assume that God's provision is adoption rather than defying medical odds (and they might be right). A person in financial crisis might assume God will deliver through the normal means of hard work and a lot of time (and that might be right). But God could also provide through a sudden, unexpected windfall by unusual means. We struggle knowing what to expect and hope for because God works in both ways. Perhaps we could say, faith isn't a matter of turning off our brains, but it is also not a matter of ruling out supernatural, dramatic, mind-boggling miracles.

- How can we effectively live in the tension of knowing that God will intervene and fulfill his promises but wondering exactly how?
- What do you do when you're pulled between "rational" solutions and supernatural interventions? Perhaps you could share an example of each in your life.
- Is it wrong to ask God for reassurances of His promises (Gen. 15:2-3, 8)? Why or why not?
- Can you think of any other biblical examples of men or women who asked for reassurances? Check out (Judges 6:36-40; 2Kings 20:8-11; Luke 1:18-20) for help. Do you think Abram's question was faithless or faithful? Is it unbelief to ask for a sign?

The Jews held that Abram's faith was the greatest of his many meritorious works that earned his righteous status before God. Rabbi Shemaiah (50 BC) wrote, "Our father Abraham became the heir of this and the coming world simply by the merit of the faith with which he believed in the Lord, as it is written: 'He believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him fo<u>r righteousness.''</u> In contrast to this view, Paul asserted that Abraham was an example of someone who received righteousness by faith apart from works (Romans 4:1-25).

Discuss how a sinner can ever be righteous before a holy God. Can he be found righteous by living to his full potential (historic view of Pelagius)? Can he be made righteous through acts that serve as a means of grace (historic Roman Catholic view)? Or must a sinner be declared righteous on the basis of faith – faith in Someone who is righteous (historic Reformer's view of Sola Fide)?

Ancient royal covenants often began with the self-identification of the king and then a brief historical prologue as in (Gen. 15:7). In that text, God identifies Himself in terms of His relationship to Abram. What might He say in your case: "I am the Lord, who... \_\_\_\_\_\_" How should you respond to this kind of Lord?

As strange as the rite in (Gen. 15:9-21) might seem to modern audiences, it was familiar to Abram. In his day, it was equivalent to signing a contract and filing it with local authorities. It was common for two parties to make an oath and then seal their promises with this covenantal practice. They would cut animals in half, walk down an aisle between the pieces like (Gen. 15:17), and they would invoke a curse like, "May it be so done to me if I do not keep my oath and pledge." (Jeremiah 34:18-19) refers to a similar ceremony.

- Who passed between the animal pieces in the Gen. account? Why is that significant? Who was the keeping of this covenant dependent on?
- Why is it important to us that God's promise here did not depend on Abram's obeying any laws (Romans 4:13-17)?
- Why does God make this formal, legal covenant with his people in the first place? What does it tell you about His nature?
- What insights can you learn from the Genesis account about the New Covenant in Jesus (Matt 26:26-28)? What are the similarities and differences? What is the significance of God's promises sealed in the New Covenant with Christ's blood (as opposed to animal blood)?

God planned to postpone the fulfillment of His promise for nearly 700 years (300 from the promise until Jacob went down to Egypt, and 400 more until Moses led Israel out of Egypt).

- According to (Gen. 15:16; Hebrews 11:13-16; 20-22) what purpose did this postponement serve?
- Paul memorializes this delay in (Romans 2:4). In that passage, what attributes of God stand behind God's stayed hand, and beyond that, what should it lead people to?
- In a similar way, God is waiting to fulfill the promise of His Kingdom. According to (2Peter 3:9), why is he waiting?
- What can we learn about God from these two texts that cax n help us in times when we have to wait?

PRAYER REQUESTS	