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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Genesis 15.

(2016)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Genesis 15.

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### Topics.

- Abram's own son will be his heir and his offspring as the stars of heaven.
- Abram believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.
- The LORD tells Abram to bring a heifer, goat, ram, turtledove and a pigeon.
- The LORD tells Abram; his offspring will be afflicted four hundred years.
- A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch pass between the pieces.
- God will give Abrams offspring land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

**The previous chapter:** the focus of chapter fourteen was upon Chedorlaomer with three kings going to war against the king of Sodom and four kings. Chedorlaomer took Lot and all who were dwelling in Sodom and Gomorrah captive. Abram heard that Lot had been taken captive and rescues him. The king of Sodom and Melchizedek king of Salem went out to meet Abram and Melchizedek offered Abram bread and wine.

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### Abram's Own Son will be His Heir and His Offspring as the Stars of Heaven.

Genesis 15:1-6 ----- <sup>1</sup>After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great (I am thy exceeding great reward in KJV)." <sup>2</sup>But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house (the steward of my house in KJV) is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup>And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." (one born in my house is mine heir in KJV) <sup>4</sup>And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." <sup>5</sup>And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." <sup>6</sup>And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

**After these things:** (v1) refers to Abram rescuing Lot and his family from the armies of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him and Melchizedek king of Salem offering Abram bread and wine.

**The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:** (v1) biblical visions can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Since many of these biblical visions, events or experiences often appear as real events to the person experiencing them they can be spoken of in the following two ways: -

1. As an actual and real event.
2. As a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind).

The person having the vision maybe left in confusion as to whether it was a vision or an actual event. This is because many biblical visions appear so real the emotions and the body respond as though it is an actual real event, even though it may simply be playing out in vivid colour and crystal clear pictures on the imagination of the mind.

The reason for this is that the human nervous system does not have a mind of its own and therefore cannot discern the difference between a real picture being played out on the imagination of the mind or an imaginary one so the nervous system responds to both the real image and the imaginary image in the same manner.

This is why in many chapters the same event is written as a real experience in some verses and as a vision in others since the biblical character is not always sure what they actually experienced (2 Cor. 12:1-3).

Paul when speaking of himself in the third person said: -

- I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows and I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows (2 Cor. 12:1-3).

Jesus took Peter, James and John up a mountain and he was not only transfigured before them, and his face, shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light, but Moses and Elijah also appeared to them. This event was so real that Peter asked Jesus if he should make a tent for the Lord and one for Moses and one for Elijah, yet as they were walking back down the mountain Jesus told Peter, James and John not to tell this vision to anyone (Matt. 17:1-9).

A biblical vision is always under God's control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to and they then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision.

For further information on visions, see the title: -

- Visions in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Fear not, Abram, I am your shield and your reward shall be very great:** (v1)

God not only protected and kept Abram safe from all his enemies as he travelled through the land of Canaan, but also gave him a great victory over Chedorlaomer and the three kings with him when he invaded his camp and freed Lot and those with him.

**Your reward shall be very great:** (v1) when we consider that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true offspring (seed in KJV) off Abram and all who by faith are in Christ are children of Abram and when the Lord returns in glory to gather the offspring of Abraham (Old and New Testament) to himself to become the government of the world and rule and reign with Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords over the nations. There is no doubt when this day comes the testimony of Abram as he sits at the banquet table of the Lord will be that God has richly rewarded him.

**I continue childless:** (v2) could mean, I have grown old in years and have passed the time of having children or I am about to die childless, or my days continue to pass and I am still childless. God had previously told Abram that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed," (Gen. 12:3) this of course cannot come to pass if Abram has no child of his own.

Abram fully understanding this reality is basically saying, "What joy can I take in any blessings when you withhold from me the most treasured and promised blessing of a child from my own loins in who all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Gen. 12:3).

God had abundantly blessed Abram and made him very rich in livestock, silver and gold. (Gen. 13:2). It is as though Abram is saying, "What is the blessing of the temporary and worldly things you have blessed me with if you withhold the true blessing of a child from who would spring the promised Messiah, in whom all nations of the earth will be blessed, all my wealth and riches, victories and honours, are of no value to me, while I am deprived of a child to be heir."

At this time Sari was barren and almost ninety and Abraham is almost one hundred, so it is easy to see why Abram believed he would be childless and Eliezer would be his only heir. He was at this time experiencing the burden of delayed hope and feeling that if he departs from this world childless, which it seemed he would do, what joy could he have in all his blessings if he has no child to inherit them? He was deeply burdened with the reality that it appeared that he was never likely to have any child and therefore complains about what he thought to be true to the LORD

**Eliezer the heir of my house (the steward of my house in KJV) (v2):** Eliezer comes from the Hebrew word (*'Eliy'ezer*) it literally means God of help and aid. Eliezer was the head steward of Abram's house and as such it was his business to manage and govern the affairs of Abrams house and be in charge of overseeing the administration of all things

Abram calls him, "Eliezer of Damascus," and tells us "he was born in his house," (v2-3 KJV). Damascus comes from the Hebrew word (*Dammeseq*) and refers to a city of Syria, which means that Eliezer must have been born while Abram was dwelling in Damascus which shows that the expression "Eliezer of Damascus," simply means that Eliezer was born there. The fact Abram had no child of his own and Eliezer was born and raised in his house (most likely as Abram's own son) and is now a faithful steward and the head of Abram's household would explain why he would become heir if Abram remains childless.

It is generally assumed by many that this Eliezer of Damascus is the oldest servant of Abraham's household spoken of in chapter twenty four, who sixty five years later had charge of all that Abraham had and who Abraham sent to find a bride for his son Isaac (Gen. 24:1-4). Though this maybe very likely it cannot be said with dogmatic certainty since this steward's name is not mentioned and there is no evidence he came from Damascus. (Eliezer is also the name of a man of Damascus and of ten Israelites).

**Your very own son shall be your heir: (v4)** (he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels in KJV). The following verses show that the expression, "out of thine own bowels," means from his own body.

- God said to him (Jacob), "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body (thy loins in KJV). (Gen. 35:11).
- When your (King David's) days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring (seed in KJV) after you, who shall come from your body (thy bowels in KJV), and I will establish his kingdom. (2 Sam. 7:12).
- Nevertheless, it is not you (King David) who shall build the house, but your son who shall be born to you (come forth out of thy loins in KJV), shall build the house for my name. (2 Chron. 6:9).

Sarah has been barren for over twenty years since God first said, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed," it is certain that during these years Abram and his wife had laid together many times hoping Sarai would conceive. At this time Sari is barren and almost ninety and Abraham is almost one hundred.

Abram had not only lost all hope that Sari would ever be a mother and that he would never have a child from his own body, but had also intended to make Eliezer the heir to all God had blessed him with. Now while Abram had given up all hope God tells him that Eliezer will not be his heir for he will have a child from his own body that will inherit all he has.

**So shall your offspring be: (v5)** (so shall your seed be, in KJV) here the LORD amplifies the following promise that he had previously given Abram saying, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," (Gen. 12:3) by telling him that his offspring will be as the stars of heaven. (v5).

The God of all creation made the stars by the word of his power and by the same word is fully able to heal Sari's barren womb and multiply the offspring of Abram and his wife.

History shows that Sarai gave birth to Isaac and from Isaac came Jacob and from Jacob came twelve sons, who became twelve tribes who formed the nation of Israel whose inhabitants have spread into multitudes of nations throughout the world today. Truly God has kept his promise to Abraham.

However this is not the end or the ultimate fulfilment of God's promise to Abram as the following verses show that the expression in your seed (i.e. in your offspring), refers to the Lord Jesus Christ: -

- Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring (seed in KJV). It does not say, "And to offsprings (thy seed in KJV)," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring (thy seed in KJV)," who is Christ. (Gal. 3:16).
- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28).
- If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring (Abraham's seed in KJV), heirs according to promise. (Gal. 3:29).
- The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." <sup>9</sup>So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Gal. 3:8-9).
- He (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, <sup>12</sup>and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. (Rom. 4:11-12).
- Here Paul is highlighting to the doubting and legalistic Jews that Abraham was declared by God to be righteous by faith, prior to being circumcised, to shine a spotlight on the truth that it is those (Jews and Gentiles) who walk by faith and not works who are the true offspring of Abraham and who will inherit the promise.
- That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring (the seed in KJV) —not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (Rom. 4:16).

All in Christ are blessed with, redemption, justification, forgiveness of sins, sanctification, adoption, God's love and grace and at the end of their day's eternal life.

**Ponder for a moment:** it was not possible for Abram to fully comprehend how God would accomplish and fulfil this promise or even realize the magnitude of it at the time they were made and yet he forsook all and obeyed the LORD.

- By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (Heb. 11:8)

**Abram believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness:** (v6) James the brother of Jesus wrote, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness and he was called a friend of God." This means that all who believe in God and have faith in His plan of salvation are not only counted righteous by faith and a friend of God, but will also receive the promise of Abraham because they by faith become children of Abraham and heirs of the promised eternal inheritance.

The apostle Paul in his letter shines a light upon this same truth stating that as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness so then it is those of faith who are the true sons of Abraham. (Gal. 3:6-7). He goes on to say that the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." (Gal. 3:8). This means that those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Gal. 3:9) and if they are Christ's (whether Jew or Gentile), then they are Abraham's offspring and heirs according to promise God made to Abraham.

(Gal. 3:28-29). Paul amplifies this truth even further by highlighting that fact that Scripture says that the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offspring's," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. (Gal. 3:16) which means the following two things: -

1. Those in Christ receive the promised Spirit of righteousness that leads to eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Those in Christ are the true children of Abraham and as his children are heirs of the everlasting promise God made to Abraham saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance." (Psalm 105:10-11).

In chapter eleven of Hebrews (commonly known as the hall of faith) it is written: -

- By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (Heb. 11:8-10).

The author goes on to say that all the faithful of the Old Testament lived as strangers and exiles on the earth, because they desired a better country that is, a heavenly one and because of this God was not ashamed to be called their God and has therefore prepared for them a heavenly city (Heb. 11:13-16). Likewise today Christian walk by faith as citizens not of this world, but as citizens of heaven living amongst foreigners and strangers looking forward to the same city that the Old Testament faithful looked toward, the city whose designer and builder is God that God promised Abraham and the faithful that they would receive as an everlasting inheritance. (Heb. 11:8-10).

God at this present time is still in the process of building the everlasting city that both the faithful of the Old and New Testament look forward to. At this present time it is being established worldwide amongst every nation, language and people by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a spiritual city called a new nation in Christ, a new creature in Christ, the church, the global body of Christ and the Kingdom of Christ.

This present spiritual city God is building in the hearts and minds of the faithful worldwide will be a literal city on earth when Christ the offspring of Abraham returns in glory to Jerusalem the Holy city of God and gathers the faithful to himself and then rules and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth perfectly fulfilling God's promise to Abraham Isaac and Jacob and His promise to all who by the same faith belong to Abraham's global family.

For further information on this city see the title: -

- Spiritual Kingdom of God in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**NOTE:** it is important to notice that the focus of faith is upon the LORD (i.e., upon the person who made the promise). It is having full trust and reliance on God to bring to pass what He has promised concerning the future. Likewise the focus of Christian faith should be upon the promised Christ, the Christ in Scripture, the living Christ, Christ the Saviour and Christ the King who will come again.

Though we are all called to believe the word of God our highest focus should be upon the author of it. When it is seen that it is reliance and trust in a person that Christian faith rests upon and that, that person is Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world a light shines within the heart and mind upon the simple and clear nature of biblical faith.

**The effect of Abram's faith:** Abram was not righteous in the fullest sense (i.e., without sin), but he yielded himself to God and trusted Him, and God accepted that faith as being equally equivalent to righteousness. God's acceptance of Abram being counted righteousness was shown by the fulfilment of the promises he made to him.

This is the great truth and the core message of the Bible, faith is accepted, regarded and treated for righteous by the estimation and assessment of God in accordance with His supreme desire for mankind's salvation. Since biblical faith unites us with Christ the perfect Righteous One, it is in itself a supreme act of righteousness that will in eternity blossom out into perfect righteousness.

**Struggle and faith:** Abraham had great faith, he left his home not knowing where he was going based on God's word, yet prior to God imputing righteousness to him he had struggled with his faith, so much so that he complained to God (Gen. 15:2). After overcoming his struggle with unbelief God crowned and honoured him.

The apostle Peter wrote: "the tested genuineness of your faith is more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire." This is because if it endures the test it leads to eternal life and everlasting happiness. In a natural family, children do not turn against their parents simply because they suffer some kind of crisis, (i.e., sickness, fire, floods, lack of income etc.). When a family is bonded by true love nothing separates its members from that love.

Likewise those who know the love of God do not turn against Him simply because of hardships and troubles. They understand that God's love toward them is not dependent on the circumstance of life (good or bad), but is manifested through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ's brutal and cruel death on the bloodstained cross of Calvary.

If our world's top scientist and medical practitioners could invent a pill that would give people eternal life the billionaires of this world would write out a cheque no-matter what the cost to buy as many as they could for their family and friends, and almost all the world would sell everything they had to purchase one. This is why Peter is able to say, "Tested faith is more precious than gold."

**Imputed righteousness:** righteousness is imputed to Abram (as it is with all the faithful) meaning mercy and grace and the pardon of sin are extended to the faithful who believe. Faith is the only thing that can make a sinner righteous. It should be highlighted here that it is not actual or literal righteousness that is counted as such, but believing God, who promises blessing, mercy and forgiveness to the undeserving. Righteousness that leads to salvation is entirely different to obeying God. Righteousness that comes by faith leads to eternal life, whereas obedience results in rewards to the deserving.

Though those in Christ are counted by God to be perfectly righteous there is nothing within them that allows them to make such a claim on their own merits. Righteous can only come by faith since it is only faith that brings us into union with the Saviour who is perfectly righteous and it is by his righteousness that God counts us righteous. If Abram, who was rich in good works, could not be justified by them, but only by his faith how much less can we be justified by our works?

**The LORD tells Abram to bring a Heifer, Goat, Ram, Turtledove and a Pigeon.**

Genesis 15:7-11 ----- <sup>7</sup>And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." <sup>8</sup>But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" <sup>9</sup>He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup>And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. <sup>11</sup>And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans: (v7) some say that this verse contradicts (Gen. 11:31-32) because there it says that it was Terah the father of Abraham who took his family from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan and there is no mention of God calling Abram out of Ur whereas here in chapter fifteen it says: -

- God said to Abram, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." (Gen. 15:7).

And in Genesis chapter twelve we read: -

- The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country (this is from Haran not Ur) (see verse 4) father's house to the land that I will show you." (Gen. 12:1).

Nehemiah chapter nine says: -

- It was God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. (Neh. 9:7).

Stephen in the New Testament says: -

- God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land to the land that I will show you and Abraham went out from Ur of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. After Terah his father died, God removed him from Haran into the land of Canaan. (Acts 7:1-4).

These Scriptural variances or seemingly difficulties or contradictions (as some believe) can be harmonized in the following three ways: -

1. It is very likely that Terah being the father and head of the family is given the honour of leading his family out of Ur (whose inhabitants were worshippers of false gods) and this is why God's call to Abram is not mentioned at this time. This would be in harmony with ancient cultures and biblical principles since the father of a family was to be given honour.
2. While living in Haran the land had become Abrams land (Gen 24:4) (i.e., considered his homeland). However this does not mean that Abram's calling to leave his land was first given in Haran, but only that the calling to go to Canaan had not yet been fulfilled by him since he was still living with his family in Haran caring for his old and frail father. After Terah's death Abram was released from this duty and therefore it was now time for him to move to Canaan and fulfil the calling God had firstly given him in Ur.
3. Even if God did not literally call Abram out of Ur by a vision or some other means, but instead lead him out by his father Terah it does not mean that these verses contradict each other. This is because it was God's will that Abraham left Ur and travelled to the land of Canaan and therefore even if he left according to Terah's instruction God would still be seen or spoken of in Scripture as the one who led him out of Ur of the Chaldeans.

**Bring me a heifer three years old:** (v9) when two or more parties joined in an agreement of great importance, they set up or practiced some form of ritual to engrave upon their minds that the covenant they were making was forever binding to the parties involved. Sacrificing animals for various occasions was known as early as the days of Able and Noah.

- Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering (Gen. 4:4).
- Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. (Gen. 8:20).

This means that this type of ritual may have been a common practise amongst the early Eastern people, it should be noticed that here is no mention in these verses of a sacrifice, this is because the severing of the animals are to act as a sign to Abram and not a sacrifice to be offered to the LORD. However under the Levitical law these animals are later set apart for such sacrifices.

**Three years old:** (v9) the Levitical law required creatures of a year old only to be offered; whereas these were three years old, this is perhaps because the heifer, she-goat, and ram at three years old would each have attained their full strength and maturity and the number three is also a sacred number that denotes perfection and therefore they are most apt for God's service.

**Bring me a heifer:** (v9) there are different ideas as to what the severing of the bodies symbolise amongst commentators the most common two are: -



1. The two halves represent the covenant between two parties who agree to the terms of the agreement and with the rights, blessings and penalties with which it guarantees.
2. The severed animal symbolises the penalty of breaking the agreement as explained in the following verses: -
  - The men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts— <sup>19</sup>the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. <sup>20</sup>And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. (Jer. 34:18-20).

The severing of an animal engraved upon the mind the severe penalty an individual or a nation would suffer if they broke the covenant. Their destruction would be as complete as the death that had befallen the slaughtered animal.

There is no mention of these creatures being sacrificed and offered to the LORD, this is because they were not taken for an offering or sacrifice, but to be a sign to Abram that his offspring would possess the land and a sign of the seriousness of the covenant and the penalty for breaking it. There are various ideas as to why these particular animals were chosen, the best of them I feel is because of their following qualities since they also cover the qualities of human nature: -

**The heifer:** for its strength and might amongst domestic animals.

**The goat:** for its wild and free nature.

**The ram:** for its stubbornness, determination and resilience.

**The turtledove and pigeon:** for their simplicity, innocence and harmlessness.

It should be mentioned that these are only speculations and that it is certain that there are many other good viewpoints should the reader wish to search them out.

**A sign from God:** Abram asked God for a sign and God gave him one that would be forever imprinted in his mind and the mind of those who heard of it (especially in the mind of his offspring). The animals were cut in half and each half was laid opposite its other half, another way of saying the same thing would be to say that the animal was cut through the middle and then laid out flat with each half opposite its other half. However the turtledove and the pigeon were not severed, but it is most likely Abram also laid them out opposite each other so that there was as it were a path between the divided parts and the turtledove and the pigeon.

**Abram drove birds of prey away:** (v11) Abram was fully aware that this was a very serious holy service before the LORD and therefore was not going to allow birds of prey to pollute it, likewise the faithful today should not allow sinners to pollute their faith or their walk in anyway with God.

**The LORD tells Abram, His Offspring will Be Afflicted Four Hundred Years.**

Genesis 15:12-14 --- <sup>12</sup>As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. <sup>14</sup>But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

The reason a dreadful and great darkness fell upon Abram was because even though this vision of prophecy has a great promise at the end it is a vision full of years of affliction and suffering for his offspring, before they arrive at the prosperous ending. During Abrams deep sleep the LORD reveals the following five things to Abram: -

1. His offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs.
2. They will be servants there.
3. They will be afflicted for four hundred years.
4. The LORD will bring judgment upon the nation that they serve.
5. They will come out with great possessions.

From these we see three great truths, firstly, the heirs of God's Kingdom are strangers on earth, secondly, those that are blessed and loved of God are often afflicted by the wicked and thirdly, God may allow persecutors and oppressors to trample upon His people, but those that do will not escape His judgment.

These verses predict the great and miraculous deliverance of Abram's offspring out of the land Egypt (the house of bondage). From the words, "Know for certain that your offspring," (v13) shows that it is not Abram who is involved in this prophetic vision, but his offspring which means the four hundred year time frame cannot begin until Abram has offspring, so most commentators take the time from the birth of Isaac, with Ishmael the son of an Egyptian mocking and persecuting Isaac (Gen. 21:9) and continuing from this time onward in the land of Canaan and in Egypt until the four hundred years came to an end with the death of Egypt's firstborn and the deliverance of Israel from the bondage and slavery of Egypt.

**They will be afflicted for four hundred years:** (v13) amongst commentators the exact time Israel spent in Egypt can vary between four-hundred and thirty years and four hundred years while others say that the timeframe covers around two hundred years in the land of Canaan and around two hundred in Egypt. It is true they were strangers first in Canaan (Psalm 105:12), and afterward in Egypt until they were delivered from Egypt and possessed their own land. The reason there is a variation concerning the four hundred year time is because different commentators taken the starting point of the four hundred years from the following three points with them all finishing at the death of Egypt's first born and the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt: -

1. From the birth of Isaac.
2. From the moment Ishmael mocked and scorned Isaac.
3. From the moment Israel went into Egypt, however for a great part of this time they were not afflicted, but treated with favour because the Pharaoh of Egypt had exalted Joseph to his right hand side.

The traditional belief is that Israel was in Egypt for 400-430 years, for me personally I am content to accept that the offspring of Abram was afflicted for this period of time whether that time was all spent in Egypt or some spent in Canaan and some in Egypt I will leave for those who are interested in seeking out the exact detail since it is a large study in itself.

**The LORD Tells Abram, in a Good Old Age He will go to His Fathers in Peace.**

Genesis 15:15-16 ---- <sup>15</sup>As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

<sup>16</sup>And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

The expression, "Go to your fathers," carries the idea that he will be with the faithful of old, it is an expression of esteem and honour. Abram died in peace and happiness, one hundred and fifteen years before Israel's descent into Egypt.

**They shall come back here in the fourth generation:** (v16) these four generations are identical with the four hundred years mentioned in the following verse: -

- The LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. (Gen. 15:13).

A generation here refers to the average time from birth to death of one man which was at this time reckoned to be one hundred years (or thereabouts). The fourth generation can be numbered from them going into Egypt, (or leaving Canaan), from Caleb who was of the fourth generation from Judah, or Moses who was of the fourth generation from Levi however there are no doubt many others.

Some take it as being from the fourth generation of the Amorites, because of the following verses, but it most likely refers to the fourth generation from the birth of Isaac and Abrams following offspring who were in the land of Canaan before their descent into Egypt; and later (i.e., four generations) returned to it again which they did.

**The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete:** (v16) the reason they would not have the Promised Land in their possession until the fourth generation was because, "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." The Amorites being the chief and leading tribe are used here for all the Canaanite nations.

This verse shines a light upon the truth that God did not drive the Canaanites out from any frivolous whim to make room in the land for Israel, but as an act of justice, much like He destroyed the generations of Noah by a flood, because of their extreme moral depravity and in the same way that He used Assyria to bring judgement upon the ten tribes of Israel because of their rebellion and gross corruption and used Babylon to bring His judgment upon the the two tribes of Judah for their rebellion and worship of other gods.

All of these generations (i.e., those prior to the flood, the Amorites, Israel and Judah) had to bear their own punishment in accordance with their rebellion and extreme sinfulness. Likewise throughout the history of the world, whenever the cup of iniquity of a nation overflows with vice and corruption the prosperity of that nation is headed upon the path of decay and will either waste away or be given over to another more powerful race or kingdom of conquerors.

From the statement, "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full," we learn that: -

- God foreknows the moral character of people, nations and kingdoms.
- God judges nations on the principle of moral decency integrity and goodness.
- Nations are spared until their iniquity is full.
- When a nation's iniquity is full they are then judge with punishing justice.

The day of God's ultimate judgment upon this world is at this present moment delayed and because of this it could be said that we are living in the long day of grace and the long day of death, grace and eternal life for those who choose God and His ways and death for those who do not.

On the return of the offspring of Abram to the land of Canaan the Amorite was to be the chief nation driven out, because of their extreme iniquity. The two most powerful kings of the Amorites were Sihon and Og (Num. 21:21-35) on the west of Jordan. After the invasion of Israel into their land they appear to have been extinguished as a nation as we hear no more of them in the following history of the country.

Though the Amorites were only one of the nations of the Canaanites, they were a very strong and powerful one and at this time Abram dwelt among them and for these reasons are put forward all the nations in the land of Canaan.

Though at the time of Abram there were some good people among the Amorites such as those who befriended him and who had not reached to the depth of wickedness as the majority had, but after four generations the nation had become totally corrupt which brought on their ruin and made way for the offspring of Abram to inherit their land.

All sins of individuals and nations are kept by God in a book of remembrance (a symbol of His eternal mind), not one of them is lost. As He observes the number and measure of sins, He determines within Himself how far and how long he will bear

with sinful men or nations (according to the intent and motivation of the heart), and how long the period of His patience and when the measure of the cup of iniquity is overflowing, and destruction is destined to come.

### **A Smoking Fire Pot and a Flaming Torch Pass Between the Pieces.**

Genesis 15:17 ----- 17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot (a smoking furnace in KJV), and a flaming torch (a burning lamp in KJV), passed between these pieces.

In the following verses God refers to Egypt as an iron furnace: -

- I commanded your father's when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace (Jer. 11:4).
- The LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day. (Deut. 4:20).

Based upon these verses the smoking furnace most likely symbolizes the severe suffering and misery of Abram's offspring labouring so to speak in the furnace of affliction in Egypt, while the smoke symbolised, them being in a place of darkness with no light of God and their eyes being so darkened they could not see an end of their troubles.

**A flaming torch (a burning lamp in KJV):** the following verses show that both fire and smoke is used as a symbol of God and of God's appearance: -

- The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. (Exod. 3:2).
- The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." (Exod. 19:9).
- On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. (Exod. 19:16).
- Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. (Exod. 19:18).
- Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off (Exod. 20:18).

God's own presence; for God is called a consuming fire

- Our God is a consuming fire. (Heb. 12:29).

Based upon these verses the flaming torch most likely symbolizes the following two things: -

1. The Shekinah presence of God who lead them out of Egypt by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night and afterwards appeared in a pillar of fire before the Israelites in the wilderness.
2. God by His presence, being with the offspring of Abram during their afflictions in Egypt and the joy of their deliverance and salvation.

God, being Spirit has no body which could literally and visibly pass through the pieces so symbols, types and shadows are used. It is very likely that this flaming torch of fire consumed the pieces of the animals in the same way that fire from heaven fell upon various Old Testament sacrifices and consumed them symbolizing that God had accepted them. The smoking fire pot and the flaming torch are not two separate symbols passing between the divided carcasses, but only one symbolising the two aspects (judgment and deliverance) of the one and only true God.

The smoking fire pot and the flaming torch passed between the divided pieces of the heifer, the goat, the ram and the turtledove and pigeon lying opposite each other. Here God is making a covenant with Abram and, confirming it by passing between the pieces symbolised by the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch, showing that He was and would be the light and salvation of Abram's offspring and an avenger of their enemies.

In this covenant there is no mention of Abram passing through the pieces, this is because God is making a covenant with Abram and promising him that his servant Eliezer will not be his heir, but his very own son and that his offspring will be as the stars, of heaven (Gen. 15:4-5) whereas there is nothing Abram can give or promise to God. The passing between the pieces was the confirming of the covenant God made with Abram.

**NOTICE:** the offspring of Abraham, the LORD'S people, the heirs of heaven are first strangers on earth.

**God will give Abrams Offspring Land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates.**

Genesis 15:18-21 --- <sup>18</sup>On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, <sup>19</sup>the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup>the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, <sup>21</sup>the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

Here the ten principal nations occupying the land of Canaan at this time are mentioned whereas only seven are mentioned in the times of Moses and Joshua during their time the following first three are not among them.

1. The Kenites
2. The Kenizzites
3. The Kadmonites

These three may have been extinct at the times of Moses and Joshua or perhaps so diminished in size they and inhabitants that they are not mentioned or maybe had become so mixed with the other nations that they were no longer distinct as a separate nation as the following seven were.

1. The Hittites
2. The Perizzites
3. The Rephaim (the Hivites)
4. The Amorites
5. The Canaanites
6. The Girgashites
7. The Jebusites

The seven nations during Moses and Joshua's time: -

- When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites (the Rephaim) and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves. (Deut. 7:1).

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End.