



Genesis 15-16

There was a northern confederacy of very powerful kings, from the area of Babylon, who had invaded toward the south and had conquered many cities. Five kings of the Jordan Plain confederated against them but were defeated by them. The northern kings took the city of Sodom and Gomorrah and they sacked the cities and took hostages and among them was Lot, the nephew of Abraham. When Abraham received word that Lot and his family were taken hostage, he armed three hundred and eighteen of his servants, trained in his own house, and pursued them and caught up with them at Dan. In a surprise raid at night, they attacked them from two sides; discomfited them; defeated them; and pursued them all the way to Damascus.

Abraham was able to take Lot and deliver him with his family and the other hostages. He also took all of the spoils that they had taken in their whole sortie, south. As Abraham was returning and passing by Jerusalem, the King of Righteousness, Melchizedek, came out to meet him; gave him bread and wine and blessed him. Abraham gave him tithes of all that he had. There the King of Sodom expressed to Abraham his appreciation for what he had done. He told Abraham to keep all the spoil and just to give him the hostages back. Abraham declared that he would not take so much as a thread or a shoelatchet, because, he had made a vow to the LORD, possessor of heaven and earth.

"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and they exceeding great reward." (Gen.15:1). A lot of times we do things on an impulse. There is a need and we don't really stop to think of the danger involved. We are responding and acting upon the need. If a house is on fire and you hear someone calling, you run into the house not thinking of the danger, but, only of the call for help. Afterwards you stand outside and shake and say, "that was a foolish thing to do." You begin to be frightened after your actions and this is probably what happened to Abraham. Suddenly, he realized what he had done. With three hundred and eighteen armed servants he pursued after these powerful kings, who had defeated the whole area towards the south, west, and east of him. Now, he starts thinking, what if they regroup? What if they come back to get revenge? Abraham probably became a little fearful as he began to think about all these things; so, the LORD spoke to him in a vision and told him not to be afraid.

This phrase, "fear not" is used over one hundred times in the scriptures. We have a tendency towards fear, but it is interesting that God so often addresses his servants, "Don't be afraid." Jesus told his disciples many times, "fear not." Here the LORD appeared to Abraham in a vision. A vision is spiritual insight. We're surrounded by spirit beings and the spirit world is real. Once in a while, God will open a person's eyes to behold the spirit realm and this is called a "vision." It is while a person is in a state of being awake that he suddenly sees the spirit realm.

There were those prophets of God, who had a very keen insight into the spirit realm. Remember the story of Elisha's servant when Ben-hadad's army surrounded them in Dothan. "Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host; and they came by night, and compassed the city about, And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (II Kings 6:14-17). With our limited vision, we often look at the circumstances and say, "LORD we've had it!" Paul says don't look at the things which are seen, they are only temporal; while the things which are not seen are eternal. When we see the truth, it is often just the opposite of what the obvious seems to be.

God also speaks to people through dreams as He often did in the Old Testament. Again, this is an insight into the spirit realm. Now, it is important to realize that the spirit realm is timeless, and only man dwells within the time zones. The spirit realm is outside of the time zone; so, then, when a person is able to

see in the spirit realm, by vision or dream, it is not unusual for them to see into the future. Oftentimes, speaking of the future as though it were the present.

God spoke to men through visions and dreams; He spoke face to face with Moses. So often we read, for example, "The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, the prophet, saying..." and we wonder just how God said it to him. It was interesting that when God finally spoke to Elisha, down in the area of Mount Sinai, that He spoke to him through the still small voice. I have found, for the most part, that God speaks to me through His word and through the still small voice. In the New Testament as John wrote the Book of Revelation, he said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day..." and how the word came to him, we do not know. Much of it was in the form of a vision and he conversed with various characters, often in heaven; he would converse with the elders concerning the events and receive clarity of what was going on. God can speak to people in different ways and it is wrong for us to confine God to any one pattern or way. We are so anxious to put God in a box. We want to formulize God, such as, steps one, two, three, four, and then five will fall in line. It can't be done.

In Chapter One of the Book of Hebrews, the author tells us that God, who in diverse times and in diverse ways, spoke to the fathers by the prophets and has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. Even after the Revelation of Jesus Christ, God continued to speak through the Holy Spirit to the Church. In the Book of Acts the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the ministry wherein I have called them." Have you ever wondered how the Holy Spirit spoke? We are told in that same verse that there were in that church certain prophets. My assumption would be that God spoke to them through the gift of prophecy. When Paul told Timothy to stir up the gifts that were in him; he said they were given to him by the laying on of hands and by the word of prophecy. There were times when the angel stood by Paul and encouraged him. The angel came to deliver Peter out of the prison. God spoke to them through angels. In Jerusalem, at a time of crises, the Lord stood by Paul and spoke to him and encouraged him. So, the Lord spoke directly to them, angels spoke to them, and according to the prophecy of Joel, God said, "...I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions..." I've passed through my young years without seeing any visions, but I'm hoping for dreams. For the most part, God speaks to me through His word. It is always exciting to me, when God causes His word to come alive to my heart and suddenly I begin to see and understand. His word is illuminated and I begin to see and understand things I have never seen before and that excites me.

God spoke to Abraham and told him not to be afraid. Abraham was probably thinking that he had no defense against these armies, if they came back; so, God said, "I am your shield." He could have been remorseful that he didn't take some of the spoil and the LORD declared to him, "I am your exceeding great reward." You've got me Abraham, you don't need anything else. How true that is. The Lord is the inheritance. If we would only understand that the person who possesses the Lord, possesses the resources that can never be diminished. How sad, the person who relies upon his own strength. Though he be the strongest man in the world, his strength is still limited. How blessed the man, who is going to trust in the strength of the Lord, no matter how weak he is. He is never without strength if he is trusting in the Lord. That's the whole idea: The Lord is my strength, The Lord is my keeper.

"And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen. 15:2) We know that Abraham was already very rich, in fact that is what perpetrated the separation from Lot. When they left Egypt, the Pharaoh enriched them so much that there was strife among their herdsmen. The land wasn't big enough for the two of them anymore. Now, the LORD is saying, "I am thy exceeding great reward." Abraham says, "Yeah, but what good is that?" "I don't have any heir to pass it on to and I have more than I can ever spend." "I'm childless and my heir is my servant, Eliezer of Damascus, who was born in my house."

The name Eliezer is an interesting name. It means, "God my help." One who helps is always a comfort. In the New Testament, the Greek equivalent to Eliezer would be "paracletes." Paracletes is one of the names given for the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that He would pray the Father and He would give them

another "paracletes." The word in Greek means literally, one who comes along side to help. Eliezer was Abraham's chief servant and head of the other servants. Later on, we'll find that Eliezer is the one sent to Babylon to find a wife for Isaac. Abraham as the Father sends Eliezer, a type of the Holy Spirit, to search out a bride for his son. It becomes a beautiful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit searching out a bride for the Son. He took gifts and said, "My master's house is rich and he's a great man. I've brought some of the riches for you and want to take the bride back with me. He offered to Rebecca the gifts and put bracelets on her. These gifts suggest the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which we're adorned and drawn unto our bridegroom. In the 22nd chapter of Genesis, when Abraham returns from the mount, after God stopped the sacrifice of Isaac and provided the ram; we read that Abraham came back to the servants and they journeyed back to Hebron. There is no mention of Isaac. It doesn't say Abraham and Isaac returned, it just says Abraham returned. Where was Isaac? No doubt he came back with Abraham, but the Holy Spirit is silent and doesn't tell us that. In fact, after the sacrifice, Isaac is not brought into the record again until Eliezer is returning with the bride. Isaac is out in the field meditating and he sees the camels coming and arises to meet the camels and to meet the bride. Even so, Jesus, after his sacrifice, ascended into heaven and is out of the picture, on earth, until the Holy Spirit has prepared the bride to bring to Him and then shall He arise to meet His bride.

Here, in Chapter 15 of Genesis, is the only place that Eliezer's name is mentioned. When he is sent by Abraham to get the bride, it only says that he was one of the chief servants. This is totally in keeping with the character of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "When He comes, He will not testify of Himself; but, He will testify of me." So even as the Holy Spirit inspired the type, in the Old Testament, He is careful not to include his name in the ministry of getting the bride. I have a problem with so much emphasis and talk on the Holy Spirit. He did not come to speak of Himself, but came to exalt and speak of Jesus Christ.

"And behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir..." Eliezer shall not be your heir. "...but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward 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). They had crystal clear skies with no smog or air pollution of any kind in those days; no industries, automobiles or power plants to pollute the skies. There were no lights of cities to distract or diminish from the illumination of the canopy of stars, only the blackness of the desert night. Abraham looked up and saw the billions of stars that were in the heavens stretched above him, and God said, "So shall thy seed be."

There are those, who do suggest, that God has placed the Gospel in the stars. When God said to count the stars and if thou be able to number them, so shall thy seed be; the Hebrew word for number means to "set in order" and not necessarily: one, two, three, etc. Astrology is a sad perversion of the truth that God has placed within the heavens.

The book "The Gospel in the Stars" by Bollinger and also one with a similar title by Seiss, go through the Zodiac and show that originally God intended it to have the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Psalm 19, we read, "The heavens declare the glory of God." We usually say that means the vastness of His creation, but it is also possible that the story of redemption is there in the Zodiac; because, the real glory of God is the redemption of man.

We shy away from astrology and rightly so. Astrology deals in areas that God never intended man to get into and was forbidden in scripture by Isaiah the Prophet. It is foolish to think that astrological forces have an influence upon your life and to actually govern your life by these charts of the Zodiac.

The Wise Men were guided by a Star and they were able to read a message that others did not read. It is quite possible when God is challenging Abraham to number the stars, He might be saying to consider the Gospel that is in the stars; because, God said, "So shall thy seed be." The word for seed is singular "sperma." Paul picks this up in the third chapter of Galatians as he talks about this experience of Abraham looking up into the stars and receiving the promise of God. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal.3:16). It is important to note this because the next verse tells us, "And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to

him for righteousness." (Gen.15:6). It isn't that he just believed that God was going to give him a lot of kids or descendants. It wasn't seeds, plural. It isn't that he just believed that God existed. Just faith that God exists does not save; just faith that the promises of God are true does not save; but it is the faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, that brings salvation. The faith that He died for my sins. So, Abraham by faith believed this promise of God that his "seed" would come. We read in Romans, concerning Jesus, that He was of the "seed" of Abraham. This is important, because, He was the "promised seed," the one that Abraham believed in and because of this, God declared him righteous.

God declares us righteous by the same action of believing in Jesus Christ. Abraham looked forward and believed the promise of God. We, now, look back at the fulfillment of the promise in the coming of Jesus Christ. By our believing that Jesus died for our sins, paid the penalty for our guilt, took our place and was a substitution for us in His death upon the Cross; our faith in His death and resurrection is accounted to us for righteousness by God. Abraham was not accounted righteous because of his works, though he had many good works; nor by his keeping of the law, because it wasn't given yet. He was not accounted righteous by the act of circumcision because that was not given yet. We are not accounted righteous because we keep the rituals of the church or the laws of the church or have good works. We are accounted righteous when we believe the promise of God through his Son. Salvation would come to man and that belief in the promise of God concerning the seed that would come, was the thing that accounted for righteousness.

Abraham's faith was not perfect. There were many failures. Even after he believed and God found him righteous, we find Abraham lapsing in faith when Sarah suggested that he might take her handmaiden, Hagar, that he might have an heir of his own body. In a few chapters, Abraham lies to Abimelech about Sarah being his sister and yet, God accounted his faith for righteousness; even as He accounts your faith for righteousness though it also may be imperfect.

"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." (Gen.15:7). After God accounted Abraham righteous, God is now reaffirming the promise to him. This is the reward of his faith. He believed God and God accounted it to him as righteousness and now the LORD reaffirms the promise. "And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? (Gen.15:8) Abraham is asking, in a sense, for a sign.

"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. 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. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." (Gen. 15:9-11). The fowls were vultures which are always a sign of evil in the scripture. Remember the seed that was sown by the wayside and the birds came. We are told in Mark, chapter four, "And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts." So here the bird is Satan that plucked up the seed that it could not bring forth.

"And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." (Gen.15:12). The cutting of the animals in half and laying out the carcasses opposite each other was a method by which a covenant was made. People would make a covenant and to seal it they would cut an animal in half and lay it out opposite each other and pass between the pieces in a circle eight. This bound them to the covenant that was made. There is a reference in the 34th chapter of Jeremiah and the 18th verse, of this covenant that was established by passing through animals. Abraham is saying, "How shall I know that I shall inherit it?" God says, "I will make a covenant with you and seal the promise I gave you."

"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; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance." (Gen.15:13-14). The LORD is telling Abraham that his descendants are going to go down to Egypt and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. We know, from the Book of Exodus, that the sojourn in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. There are those people who are always looking for some contradiction in the Bible. Aha! I found

one. Read carefully and it says they will be afflicted four hundred years. The first thirty years they had good treatment because Joseph was next to the Pharaoh in command. It wasn't until after Joseph died that they began to be afflicted.

"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." (Gen.15:15-16). We know that it wasn't long after Abraham died that Joseph was sold by his brothers and then he brought the family of seventy souls down into Egypt. During that sojourn they multiplied and became a nation in Egypt before God brought them out with a heavy hand into the land.

How long is a biblical generation? Here, in this passage, it is one hundred years. If you go to the genealogical records, you will find that Levi, one of the sons of Jacob, was in Egypt. Moses is the fourth generation from Levi and so, just as the LORD said to Abraham in the fourth generation; they shall come back into the land again. As they come back, they are going to wipe out the Amorites; but, the time for the judgment of the Amorites was not fulfilled at the time of Abraham.

God is so long suffering as He deals with man, I can't understand it. He is so patient that I get upset with Him sometimes. So often, I say, "Oh Lord, how long are you going to put up with this stuff?" You read about these people who are exploiting children. You can buy child pornography videos for three hundred dollars. You can even buy "snuff" videos. These people that do such things and the people that buy them makes you wonder how long God is going to put up with them. How violent and wicked can man become before God steps in and judges? Know this that the judgment of God is coming, though it may seem to be delayed. Here God was patient with the Amorites, saying, the children of Israel wouldn't come back from Egypt for four hundred years; because, the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.

We are told in the Book of Revelation that the cup of the indignation of His wrath finally overflows. The cup is being filled, but, man thinks he is getting by with his wickedness because God has not intervened. They tragically misinterpret that as: God doesn't see; or God doesn't care; or the most blasphemous of all, God approves. In one of the parades of the Gay Community, they had a banner which read, "God is gay." Boy! I'm surprised that God let them get to the end of the parade. He's so patient and He was giving the Amorites time, another four hundred years in the land, in order that they might continue until the cup of indignation was full and then His judgment and His wrath was poured out. As the children of Israel came into the land, they were ordered to utterly destroy the Amorites. Up until this moment, the iniquity of the world is not yet complete; but, I don't see how it can go much further. When the cup is full, God will exercise His powerful judgment on an unsuspecting world.

"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." (Gen. 15:17). Typifying that God was passing through the pieces. Later on God manifested Himself to the children of Israel in the "cloud" and the "pillar of fire." As it got dark, Abraham saw this burning torch and smoking oven passing between the pieces, as the covenant was being established. "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; The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (Gen.15:18-21).

"Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children; and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar." (Gen.16:1) Abraham was eighty-five years old and Sarah was seventy-five years old. Remember when Abraham went down into Egypt because of the famine in the land? He shouldn't have done that, because, it was a lapse of faith. He didn't have confidence that God could sustain him in the land; so, he went down to Egypt. He came back stained and marked. One of the things that they picked up in Egypt was a handmaiden for Sarah, Hagar, the Egyptian.

"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.16:2). Sarah suggested the use of Hagar, the handmaiden, as a means by which they could help God perform His promise. They find themselves in the position of seeking natural means to accomplish the purposes of God. That is always a mistake. How many times we have sought by natural devices to accomplish the purposes of God and with the same kind of results. We end up making a total mess out of everything.

Many times I have put myself in the position of God's little helper, to give Him opportunity to work. I give Him a time deadline. Lord, if you don't do it by this time, I will be forced to do something myself. Here we find Sarah saying, "Look Abraham, let's give up, it's not going to happen." Let's help God, you know, He needs our help now."

Have you ever been told that God needs your help? Have you ever watched telethons? God's program is going to die if you don't help Him. God's on the verge of bankruptcy. His whole work is going to cease if you don't step in and rescue Him. He's made some very dangerous fiscal mistakes. He's been irresponsible and now He's about broke. If you want to see His work continued next week, you'd better respond today and call the 800 number and bail God out of the problem that He's gotten Himself into again. God needs your help. I wouldn't want to serve that kind of a God, it would worry me. The minute God needs my help, He's in big trouble. The opposite is true. I need His help continually. The LORD is my helper.

"And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave 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, her mistress was despised in her eyes." (Gen.16:3-4). It somehow did something to Hagar that turned her against her mistress. She began to look upon her with scorn. Perhaps there was the suggestion that there was an impotency, on the part of Abraham; but, now here's proof that it was not Abraham's fault, but Sarah's. Whatever it was, Hagar began to look upon Sarah in a disdainful way.

"And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee..." Come on Sarah, you're the one who told him to do it. Now she's blaming him for what happened. "...I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes; the LORD judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face." (Gen.16:5-6).

"And the angel of the LORD..." Now this is the first time the angel of the LORD is mentioned in the Old Testament. We will find the angel of the LORD appearing many times in the Old Testament and many bible scholars believe that this reference to the angel of the LORD is a Theophany. Actually the angel of the LORD is none other than Jesus Christ appearing in a form to man. "...found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur." (Gen.16:7). Hagar was on her way back to Egypt and she had stopped at this spring of water. "And He said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude." (Gen.16:8-10).

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

"And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." (Gen.16:12). The Arab people today are descendants of Ishmael. God's promise was that he would cause the descendants, of her seed, not to be counted for multitude. Today much of the crises that exists centers around the Arab people. The United States is facing a very difficult situation because of these people who are the descendants of Abraham. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free and I know of no more beautiful people in all the world than the Arab people when they love the LORD. I have found them to be so delightful and charming

when they walk with Jesus Christ. By the same token when they don't walk with Christ, they are very volatile. What a difference Jesus makes! Each ethnic group has their different characteristics, but when we come to Jesus all of that is erased. Now we have a whole new origin for our existence. If any man is in Christ, He is a new creation. He is neither Jew, Greek or whatever; as, he relates himself back to Christ and he's a Christian. That's a whole new race of people. Christians also have their own ethnic characteristics. They have great love for each other and caring and concern among brethren and what a peace marks their lives. Thank God, we can make a break with our past, in Christ.

"And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me; for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me? (Gen.16:13). Hagar caught a glimpse of God, the one who saw her. He saw the desperateness of her heart. She is carrying the child of Abraham, she doesn't know what to do and Sarah's really giving her a bad time and she fled. She is headed back to Egypt, but that's a long perilous journey. She's sitting by the spring and the LORD comes and says turn around and go back. You're going to have a son. Call him Ishmael, "the LORD hears," for the LORD has heard your cry. The LORD not only hears but He sees and she called Him the God who sees.

"Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered." (Gen.16:14) Beer means "well" and so it is named the well of the God who sees.

"And Hagar bare Abram a son; and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael." (Gen.16:15) Abraham honored the name that was given to Hagar by the angel.

"And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram." (Gen.16:16). God doesn't speak to Abraham for thirteen years. When God speaks again in the next chapter, he has many interesting things to tell Abraham.