

The Cutting of the Covenant: “He by Himself Hath Sworn”

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Sermon text: Genesis 15

15:1 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.”

The implication is that Abram was afraid.

2 But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” **3** And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”

Abram assumed that the right of inheritance would pass to this servant- according to custom.

4 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.”

5 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.”

6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Faith is always possible when God speaks, not because we are such easy believers (the opposite), but because God is sovereign!

“The church (people of God) is not a society where everyone lives in perpetual certainty of the Faith, but where we have been convinced that our doubting nature cannot be trusted in the light of what God has faithfully done in history. Faith trumps doubt. Evidence wins out over skepticism.”

7 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.” **8** But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”

Doubt is always possible! Doubters are welcome! Two aspects of doubt about what God says:

1. How do I know that you will do what you say? I have not seen it yet.

How do I know that I will be good enough/obedient enough? I am very likely to fail on my part.

Abram asks for some evidence to back up God's Word.

Ritual drama covenant Jeremiah 34:18

Literally- "Cut a covenant!" – Malediction "may this happen to me if I do not keep the covenant"

9 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." **10** 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. **11** And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

Great Darkness- everywhere in the Bible equals JUDGEMENT

The revelation of the future can be dreadful or it can be reassuring! Here it was given to confirm God's faithfulness for future generations.

13 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. **14** But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. **15** As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. **16** And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

Genesis 15:17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

Ordinary covenant: King says to vassal, May you be cut off, destroyed like these animals if you do not keep your promise.

Extraordinary covenant: each King says, “May I be cut off/ destroyed if I do not keep my covenant” promise

Unheard of extraordinary: I will assume the terms of the covenant if you fail.---May I be cut off/ destroyed if you do not keep my covenant promise.

Mark 15: 33 Isaiah 53:8 John 19:34

Remember: The breaking of bread is no sweet sentimental ceremony!

And remember that He loved you so much that He was willing!

18 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, **19** the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, **20** the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, **21** the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”