

The Covenant with Abram.

AUGUST 22. B. C. 1913. GENESIS XV : 1-18.

AFTER these things. After the signal display of courage and generosity, in last lesson, Abram settled down quietly at Hebron, while foolish Lot returned to Sodom. *The word of the Lord came*—it was revealed to him in a vision—a prophetic message. *Fear not*—the excitement of his military enterprise was succeeded by a season of despondency. The four kings whom he had routed might come back in stronger force and revenge themselves upon him. Most likely he began to reflect on the promise he had received from God, when he left his native land, ch. 12 : 2. How could he, now an old man, and childless, become the father of a great nation! Hope deferred, maketh the heart sick, Prov. 13 : 12. His faith again began to fail. *Thy shield*—I will protect thee. *Thy reward*—he should enjoy the favour and friendship of God, Isa. 41 : 8. James 2 : 23. Vs. 2, 3. *Elicter*—might become his heir, but could become his “son” only by adoption, and how sadly would that have come short of his hopes! Vs. 4-6. The rainbow was made a token of the covenant to Noah, let Abram consider the more enduring stars as his token, Ps. 8 : 3. *He believed in the Lord*—that the Lord was able to fulfil all his promises to him, Mark 9 : 23. Rom. 4 : 20, 22. V. 7. He is reminded that for this end God had brought him out of the land of Ur. V. 8. *Whereby shall I know?*—This was not said from distrust in God, but rather as though he had said,—“I believe, help mine unbelief,” Mark 9 : 24. Vs. 9, 10. The formal observance now enjoined accorded with Eastern customs when an agreement was entered upon. The animals and the fowls named include all the kinds used in sacrifice, see Lev. 1 : 2, 5, 10, 14. The division of the animals refers to the custom of passing between the halves of a divided victim, see Jer. 34 : 18, 19, symbolizing thenceforth their union. V. 12. *A deep sleep*—not of unconsciousness, rather “a divine ecstasy,” ch. 2 : 21. V. 13. *An horror of darkness*—prefigurative of the persecutions and afflictions which should overtake his descendants and delay fulfilment of the promise beyond his own lifetime. 400 years—reckoning from the birth of Isaac until the exodus. Vs. 14-16. Pointed allusion is made to the plagues of Egypt and the deliverance of the Israelites. *The Amorites*—the most powerful of the tribes of Canaan, occupying the country east of the Jordan, see Num. 21 : 21-25. V. 17. *Smoking furnace and a burning lamp*—symbols of the presence of Jehovah, Exo. 3 : 2 and 13 : 21. *Those pieces*—v. 10, probably consuming them and thus visibly ratifying the covenant, on God’s part, which is formally proclaimed in v. 18.

LEARN that they who trust in the Lord have no cause for fear. Ps. 37 : 39, 40. Righteousness shall be imputed to us also if we believe in God, Rom. 4 : 24, 25. God never forgets his promises, thought he sometimes delays their fulfilment. Gal. 3 : 14-18.

Abraham’s Intercession.

AUGUST 29. B. C. 1808. GENESIS XVIII : 16-33.

ABRAM was 99 years of age when God again appeared to him, renewed his covenant with him, changed his name to ABRAHAM, and promised him a son and heir, ch. 17 : 2, 5, 19. He entertains three heavenly messengers, ch. 18 : 2, who repeat the promise to him. V. 16. *Abraham went with them*—with eastern politeness escorted them a little way. V. 17-20. *The Lord said*—Jehovah, himself one of the three visitors, stayed to speak with him. *Shall I hide?* God would now take his “friend” (Isa. 41 : 8) into his confidence, see Exo. 33 : 11, and disclose what he was about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah, as a lesson and warning to his descendants. V. 21. *I will go down*—speaking after the manner of men, and implying that before vengeance was executed, ample proof should be afforded that the judgment was neither rash nor excessive. The Lord is slow to anger, Ps. 103 : 8. V. 22. *The men*—the angels who accompanied Jehovah, ch. 19, 1, *went towards Sodom*—for God had said, “I will know” whether they have filled the measure of iniquity, v. 21. Vs. 23-32. Abraham who had been standing before the Lord, in prayer, now draws near and commences the most remarkable instance of human intercession recorded in the Scriptures, though it does not stand alone, Num. 16 : 22. He repeats his intervention six times. The patience of the Lord is no less remarkable than the perseverance of Abraham. The account of the interview is full of instruction and affords undoubted proof of the efficacy of prayer and intercession, James 5 : 16. Other calamities have been mitigated for the sake of righteous people, Matt. 24 : 32. It is well for us that we have an advocate at the right hand of God. Heb. 7 : 25. Abraham’s is a model intercessory prayer, shewing his great faith, great humility, great charity, great earnestness and boldness. He justly appeals to the equity of the Almighty. Isaiah 3 : 10, 11. Rom. 2 : 2-6. And God’s favour to Abraham appears in this, that he did not leave off granting until Abraham left off asking, see Matt. 7 : 7, 9. Why did he stop at ten? Either he believed there were ten, or, if not so many, he thought the city ought to perish. Perhaps he had some intimations that he should cease interceding, see Jer. 7 : 16. V. 33. *The Lord went his way*—the angel of the covenant. There were not ten “righteous persons” in Sodom, but only one, and he might justly have been left to perish; but the grace of God was manifested in the saving of Lot’s family, for Abraham’s sake. *Abraham returned unto his place*—to Hebron—to observe what the event would be. His prayer was answered though Sodom was not saved.

LEARN from v. 19 the importance of religion in the family, and, from the whole lesson, the duty of earnest, persevering intercessory prayer for others. That, sooner or later, sin will certainly be punished. We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, vs. 2-8 and Heb. 13 : 2.