

Lesson VI.

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAM

August 11, 1901

Genesis 15: 1-18. Vs. 5 to 18 only printed, as recommended by the International S.S. Lesson Committee. Commit to memory vs. 5-7. Read Genesis, chs. 15, 16.

5 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.

6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

7 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.

8 And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

9 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.

10 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.

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep

Revised Version—Tell; 2 O Lord God; 3 Omitt unto; 4 Each half over against the other; 5 The birds of prey; 6 And; 7 But; 8 And; 9 Amorite; 10 Flaming torch; 11 These; 12 That day.

fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

17 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.

18 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.

EXPLANATION

Connection—Lot, having at last made his home in Sodom, was carried away with its inhabitants by a horde of soldiers from the far East (ch. 14: 10-12). Abram with his servants defeated the invaders and rescued Lot (vs. 13-16), and was blessed by Melchizedek, the King of Salem, as he returned (vs. 18-20).

1-4. The word of the Lord. This was a new revelation, following the scenes of trial through which he had passed. In a vision; possibly by way of a trance (Acts 10: 10). **Fear not, Abram.** There was much to cause alarm, for the enemies were strong and might return with greater force; and besides Abram had as yet not one foot of the land which he had been promised. **I am thy shield.** God will Himself stand between Abram and all danger (Compare 2 Kings 6: 17; Matt. 26: 53). He will also be his exceeding great reward. A childless man Abram was, though 84 years of age. How can he found a great nation? Must he make his servant and steward, Eliezer of Damascus, his heir and through him found the nation? God's answer is, No, this shall not be thine heir. A son is to be born to thee in thine old age.

5. Brought him forth abroad; whether in vision or literally is not clear. **Tell (number or count) the stars.** Who can, save God Himself? (Ps. 147: 4.) **So shall thy seed be;** a great promise, but corresponding to the promise given at the first (ch. 12: 2).

6, 7. He believed in the Lord. The word used here is remarkable. It means "he was supported, he was built up, he reposed as a child in his mother's arms, in the strength of God," absolutely trustful. And his faith met with God's approval—he counted it to him for righteousness; accepted him as righteous because he believed God's promise. [The older scholars should study Paul's use of this verse in Rom. 4 and Gal. 3.] **The Lord which brought thee out.** Compare the preface to the Ten Commandments, Ex. 20: 2. In each case God is a Redeemer. To give thee this land. God's purposes never change.

8-11. Whereby shall I know? Abram sought a visible token for the strengthening of his faith; and God proceeds to make a solemn covenant with him, after the manner that prevailed. The animals, young and perfect, were cut in two lengthwise and each half laid over against the corresponding half, so as to leave a narrow passage between, through which the contracting parties solemnly walked. **And when the birds of prey (Rev. Ver.) came down;** a touch, showing Abram's faith and patience. He can wait till God is ready.

12-16. A deep sleep . . . an horror of great darkness. The very presence of God was there. Wondrous and dark things were to be revealed. Abram was overwhelmed. **Thy seed shall be a stranger . . . shall serve;** a prophecy of the sojourn and bondage of the people of Israel in Egypt. **They shall afflict them.** This took place in the time of the king that "knew not Joseph." (Ex. 1: 8.) **Will I judge.** The ten plagues and the overthrow at the Red Sea were part of the punishment. **Afterwards they shall come out.** The Book of Exodus tells the story. **A good old age.** He lived to be 175 years old. **In the fourth generation.** "The average period of life at that time was about 100 years." **The iniquity of the Amorites (inhabitants of the land) is not yet full.** God is just and will not allow them to be driven out before they have deserved it, and so the "chosen people" must patiently wait until God's purposes ripen.

17, 18. A smoking furnace; the circular household firepot—possibly a symbol of the afflictions of Abram's posterity. **A burning lamp.** Fire was a common symbol of God's presence. This "burning lamp" passed between the pieces, to signify that God ratified the covenant or solemn engagement by which He bound Himself to the terms that follow in v. 18. It was a very large covenant, but it has been fulfilled to the letter. (1 Kings 4: 21.) It is still to be even more largely fulfilled in the spread of Christ's kingdom.