

# The Book of Genesis

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### Cutting a Covenant

- I. Abram's Doubt (Genesis 15:1-6)
- A. After the battle of the kings, God again emphasized His promise to Abram by appearing to him in a vision.
  - B. God declared that He was both a shield and an exceeding great reward to Abram.
    - 1. As a shield, God would protect Abram – as He had proven in Abram's victory in the recent battle.
    - 2. As a reward, God would provide for Abram – even though Abram had rejected the spoils of the battle.
    - 3. God was teaching Abram to place his complete trust in Jehovah.
    - 4. There is no greater reward than God Himself!
    - 5. The glory of Heaven is that man can live in the presence of God.
  - C. Yet, Abram still had questions and doubts.
  - D. God had promised him a great nation, but still Abram had no children.
  - E. He wondered if Eliezer, a steward in his household, would be considered his heir.
  - F. God declared that Abram's heir would be his own son.
  - G. Then, He promised again the innumerable descendants who would come from Abram.
  - H. Abram believed in God – trusted Him and His word – and God reckoned it to Abram as righteousness.
- II. God's Confirmation (Genesis 15:7-21)
- A. As further proof of His faithfulness, God reminded Abram that He had brought him out of Ur and to the land of Canaan.
  - B. Even though he was in the land, Abram wanted proof from God that he would really inherit it.
  - C. Thus, God "cut a covenant" with Abram.
    - 1. This was a known and common practice of those times (cf. Jer. 34:18-22).
    - 2. An animal would be cut in half and each part placed on either side of a small valley.
    - 3. As blood flowed from the animal halves, it would collect in the middle in a "path of blood."
    - 4. Those who were entering into the covenant would then remove their shoes and walk the path of blood.
    - 5. It symbolized the punishment either would deserve if he broke the covenant.
    - 6. Thus, it was a covenant sealed with blood.
  - D. Abram took five animals and divided them – a heifer, goat, ram, turtledove, and pigeon (the birds were not divided in half).
  - E. As the sun was setting, a deep sleep and frightening darkness came upon Abram, from which God spoke to him (cf. Gen. 2:21).
  - F. God did not simply restate His promise to Abram; rather, He foretold events that would happen to Abram's descendants.
    - 1. They would be strangers in a foreign land.
    - 2. They would be afflicted, but later freed from their sufferings.
    - 3. In the fourth generation, they would return to the land of Canaan.

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- G. Then a smoking furnace (firepot) and flaming torch (lamp) passed between the divided animals.
    - 1. God was walking the path of blood to cut a covenant with Abram.
    - 2. Note that God alone walked this path – Abram did not.
    - 3. God's covenant was absolutely sure and certain – and not dependent upon Abram or any man.
  - H. God finished His promise by specifying the borders of the land to be inhabited by Abram's descendants.
- III. Was Abram Saved by Faith Alone? (Genesis 15:6)
- A. This verse is often used to teach the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.
  - B. However, there are some important things that must be remembered.
    - 1. Abraham was not an alien sinner separated from God.
    - 2. He had been a man of faith – and a faithful child of God – for many years (cf. Acts 7:2-5; Heb. 11:8).
    - 3. Clearly, Abraham's faith included obedience.
  - C. Romans 4 – Abraham was saved by faith without the works of the Law of Moses.
  - D. Galatians 3 – Abraham was saved by faith without the works of the Law of Moses.
  - E. James 2 – Abraham was saved by faith with works of obedience!
  - F. True faith always obeys the will of God.