

The Promise of God
The Promise Produces
Bishop Jesse White Jr

Taken from the sermon "Church of Fire", first preached in Jamaica WI by Bishop Jesse White Jr. on his first foreign missionary journey outside of the US.

Abram's Reassurance

The episode with Abraham / Abram in chapter 15 starts with Abram puzzled at the fact that God would make such a Promise and he not have any children for such a promise to work. Abram thinks that he will leave his inheritance to his servant Eliezer. God reassures him that he will have an heir from his own body and that his offspring shall be as the number of stars in the sky.

¹Gen 15:6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (niv)

God credits Abram to be a righteous man because of his unwavering faith toward God's spoken word; however, Abram still wishes to know just how all that he has been promised is going to happen. Like so many of us want to see ahead of time, so Abram is no different.

The Covenant, Blood and Fire

God demonstrates to Abram that His word is His deed. He tells Abram to bring Him a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old and a young pigeon. The heifer was used in ritual ceremony for the purpose of ceremonial cleansing; the goat is generally used to represent an offering for sin, and the ram for the purpose of atonement. The pigeon oft times also represented a sin offering.

These items Abram brought before God, and in the custom of the Chaldeans split in half, with the exception of the pigeons and laid opposite each other. Abram was careful not to allow any birds of prey to devour the items brought before the Lord God. Abram falls into a deep sleep and God begins to give him instructions for the future of the nation he would birth into existence. As Abram is sleeping we are told that a

¹ The New International Version. (2011). (Ge 15:6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

“smoking furnace” or firepot with a blazing torch” appears and moves through the pieces. This smoking furnace and blazing torch are all symbols of fire moving through the blood of the animals in this ceremony. To the Chaldean this was a cultural practice when one had made a promise and took it a step further to mean a covenant; —which was a legally binding agreement between more than one party. This was something that Abram could understand and receive as assurity.

²Gen. 15: 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

Allegory Ushers in Principle

Little does Abram know that this ceremony would turn out to be a precursor to another actual activity far into the future and set the world ablaze with the Promise of God fulfilled through the seed of Abraham. When parties would make covenant with one another they would walk between the split pieces of the animal to represent a sealing of the agreement. In this ceremony the fire represents the presence of God walking through the articles of agreement, thus sealing His Promise made. This Blood and Fire ceremony would serve as the basis by which God would place His signature of approval or mark in the earth’s atmosphere;—giving confirmation of His presence in various activities. Indeed, allegorical is this experience of Abram’s that transcends time and ushers in principle upon which God gives us the witness of Promise in our lives today.

Elijah and God’s Fire

Another episode where God shows His approving presence is found in I King 18. Here is where the Prophet Elijah had a contest with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who “ate at the table of Jezebel.” The contest was to determine who is the true and living God. After they had set up sacrifices, one for the false prophets and one for the Prophet Elijah, the God who would answer by fire would be declared the only real God. Neither Elijah or the false prophets were to light the fire themselves, but wait for the true God to start the fire. The

² *The New International Version. (2011). (Ge 15:17–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.*

prophets of Baal leaped upon the altar calling on Baal and cut themselves trying to get Baal to answer by fire but it did not happen. Elijah dug a trench around the altar where the sacrifice was and had the people pour four barrels of water on the sacrifice and the wood no less than three times. Elijah then called on:

³“...the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel to let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.”

The Birth of the Church by Fire and Blood

In the Acts of the Apostles we see in chapter 2 that when the believers of that day went into the upper room waiting on the Promise of the Father; —they were at that time all on one accord with singleness of mind, singleness of heart and “there came a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, that filled the house where they were; —and there sat upon them cloven tongues of fire” representing the presence of God once again walking through the blood of sacrifice. Only this time the sacrifice was Jesus who had shed His blood and became the sin offering (Rom.8:3,4), the offering of atonement and the offering of purification for all of mankind. Now the Apostle Peter begins his first sermon to declare the Promise of God has come to fruition in Jesus the Christ. Peter preaches that:

⁴Acts 2:39 *The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.*”

This promise is to the people who were at Jerusalem specifically, and pertains to the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost; however, this promise traces all the way back to Abraham for Christ is the seed of Abraham, the son of David and the Promise giver. Here we see the birthing of baptized believers made up primarily of born again Jews, but this ratio would not last for long. The Apostle Paul is called for the purpose of

³ *The New International Version. (2011). (1 Ki 18:36–38). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.*

⁴ *The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 2:39). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.*

ministering to the Gentile Nations and in chapter 11 of the same book is where we read that the believers that were scattered preached at Antioch to the Grecians or non Jews.

⁵*Acts 11:22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

The Promise Produces the Church that is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. The Apostle Paul teaches the church at Ephesus that:

⁶*Eph. 2: 13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away from God are brought near through the blood of Christ's death. 14 Christ himself is our peace. He made both Jewish people and those who are not Jews one people. They were separated as if there were a wall between them, but Christ broke down that wall of hate by giving his own body. 15 The Jewish law had many commands and rules, but Christ ended that law. His purpose was to make the two groups of people become one new people in him and in this way make peace. 16 It was also Christ's purpose to end the hatred between the two groups, to make them into one body, and to bring them back to God. Christ did all this with his death on the cross.*

⁵*The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 11:22–26). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.*

⁶ *The Everyday Bible: New Century Version. (2005). (Eph 2:12–16). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.*

Discuss the Following

1. What have you learned about God's sense of our need for assurance after reading about how He dealt with Abram?
2. What do we understand about God's way of sealing covenant promise?
3. Discuss the representation of fire as it relates to God in the experience of Abram in Gen. 15. —How does the fire in Matt. 3:11,12; Acts 2:3; Heb. 12:29 relate to Gen. 15 and the life of the believer today? Or is the fire of God existent in the life of the believer?
4. How does an allegory speak to us and usher in principle?
5. Share your Acts 2 experience with your group! Please.
6. What is the difference in Israel's children's idea of a homologous community and God's production of such a community? Discuss the Apostle Paul's concept of God's production.