

God told Abram not to be afraid—which means He knew Abram was afraid of something. Abram had just won this huge battle against all odds. He had seen firsthand the favor and power of God. What could he possibly have been afraid of? It is possible that Abram feared future military reprisals from Kedorlaomer and his allies. When the kings got home and started licking their wounds, they may have asked, “How did Abram’s little army beat up on us?” Abram may have won the battle, but had he won the war? God promised Abram the land in Genesis 12:7 and 13:14-17 but there are still lots of bad guys living there. The word of God to Abram, “I am a shield to you,” could be aimed at subsiding his fear of future military conflict.

Application: “Fear not” appears over 200 times in Bible. That says a lot about the relationship that God desires to have with us. Don’t look at your circumstances. Look at your God who controls and leads you through your circumstances. There is no need to fear the future. Are you willing to place your faith and trust in the sovereignty of God?

What are some examples of things that make us afraid? Failure, death, adversity.

What are some ways to overcome fear? Review some of the 200 “fear not” verses.

What does the Lord promise to Abram? To be his shield and very great reward.

Application: How is the Lord a shield to us? Think about what a shield does. It protects. It deflects attacks (of Satan). It absorbs the arrows and darts from the enemy. God doesn’t say I’ll *give* you a shield, He says I’ll *be* your shield.

How is the Lord our reward? It’s what we get in return for placing our faith in him—a relationship with God for all eternity.

How does Abram address the Lord in verses 2 and 8? “O Sovereign Lord” Abram acknowledged the sovereignty of God. He knew who was in charge. Abram’s victory over the four kings was sweet but there was one lingering question which seemed to overshadow all else. So this time when God spoke to him, Abram raised his hand and said, “Wait a minute. What good is success, without a successor?” He recalled the earlier three-fold promise of God: Genesis 12:2 “I will make you into a great nation.” Genesis 12:7 “To your offspring I will give this land.” and Genesis 13:16 “I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth.”

What was Abram’s mistake? Why was he doubting? He was questioning God because of his own inability to produce an heir. He considered it to be his job to fulfill God’s promise.

From God’s perspective, was Abram’s question faithless? Abram wasn’t questioning God’s ability or judgment. Abram’s question does not seem to reflect disbelief, but wonder at how this will be accomplished.

What was God’s response? There was no rebuke (or disapproval) from God. Note God’s response in verse 5: “Count the stars.”

Application: Is it OK to question/ask God for reassurances of His promises?

What are some examples from Scripture of other people who questioned God’s promises? Gideon (Judges 6:36-40), David (Psalm 13, Psalm 22, Psalm 55, Psalm 60), Zechariah (Luke 1:11-20), and Mary (Luke 1:29-38).

Based on these Scriptures, what’s the secret to asking/questioning God? Is there a right and wrong way to do it?

Who are Abram’s *physical* offspring today? Countless Jews. (and Arabs)

Is this what God had in mind when He made the promise to Abram about his descendants? Are there any other kinds of descendants? God had spiritual descendants in mind.

Who are Abram’s *spiritual* offspring today? Those who have placed their faith and trust in Christ. Christians are spiritual children of Abraham.

- Romans 4:16: “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.”
- Galatians 3:7, 29 “Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham” . . . “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed.”

How was Abram saved? By faith (Genesis 15:6) Until now his faith was more of general faith manifest in obedience to God's commands. This time it's personal. It is at this point that God chose to announce that Abram's faith was a saving faith.

How are we saved? God's way of saving men is not new. It has not changed from Old Testament times to New. Always, God has saved men by grace, through faith. There is no other way. While Abram was saved by faith in the One who would come (looking forward/future promises), we are saved by faith in this One who has come (looking backward/current promises).

What does it mean to be credited as righteous? Right standing or relationship before God

In verses 9 – 21, what is going on between God and Abram? This is the first covenant God made with Abram.

In the ancient world of Abram, legal and binding agreements were not put on papers written by lawyers and signed by the parties involved. Instead, the two parties would arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement, and then they would formalize the agreement in the form of a covenant.

The covenant was sealed by the dividing of an animal (or animals). In fact, the technical term literally means "go cut a covenant." They cut the animal(s) in half and the two parties would pass between the halves. It seems that in this oath, the men acknowledged that the fate of the animal(s) should be theirs if they broke the terms of their agreement.

What was the promise of the covenant? The promised land. Verse 18 says, "To your descendants I give this land."

In those days when a covenant was ratified it was done by both parties walking between the animal halves. What is the significance of only the Lord passing between the divided carcasses of animals? This was done to signify that the covenant was unilateral and unconditional, initiated and fulfilled by God alone. No conditions were placed upon Abram for its fulfillment. God was declaring, "I am doing this because of who I am." This was a covenant of pure grace.

What does this have to do with the sin of the Amorites and why was God waiting so long to judge them? This might have been God's perspective: "I am giving the Amorites an opportunity to repent. I am going to continue to wait for them to repent because I love them as much as anyone else. I will not act against them until their iniquity requires it of me."

The Amorites were growing more and more wicked, and their day of reckoning was steadily approaching. Like Sodom and Gomorrah. See the patience and perseverance of God here.

There are two reasons for the 400-year delay before the land of Canaan would be possessed. First, the children of Abraham would not yet be able (or numerous enough) to possess the land earlier. Secondly, the people of the land were not yet wicked enough to thrust out. God lets it get so bad that the consequences of wickedness are apparent to all. His wrath will be seen as justified and completely righteous.

How many covenants did God make with Abram? Two—in Genesis chapters 15 and 17.

Does He make any covenants in the New Testament? Yes, Jesus instituted it at the Last Supper and it is observed today through communion. 1 Corinthians 11:25 "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Where do you find the New Covenant described in the Scriptures? Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:8-13.

Application: The New Covenant is also unilateral and unconditional. It is not dependent on our performance. It was proclaimed at the Last Supper and put into effect by Jesus' shed blood.

Did Abram live to see all of God's promises fulfilled? No, yet he believed and trusted.