

Because of the Covenant I can Know God

Genesis 15:1-18

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”² But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”³ Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.⁷ Then He said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.”⁸ And he said, “Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?”⁹ So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.¹¹ And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.¹³ Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.¹⁸ On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.”

We are doing a series that deals with our covenant relationship with God. In our last study we saw that a covenant

was more than just a treaty. It was both a legal contract and a formalized bond of life and death sealed with an oath. **Tonight I want to talk to you about the fact that** “Because of the Covenant I can know God.”

Genesis 15 is such a rich passage of Scripture that it offers a tremendous insight into the covenant relationship that God had with Abraham. The foundation of this entire passage is given to us in verse 1, “I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” It is essential for us to understand that the covenant was not the reward. The promise was not the reward. **Abraham’s inherited righteousness was not the reward.** God and God alone was the reward. Abraham did not follow the promise; he followed God. From the beginning his focus was on God and he followed without even knowing what the promise was.

It seems to me that many churches today have this whole idea reversed. We seem to be seeking the blessings of God as if the relationship is secondary or not important at all. Those who seek the promise or the blessing and forget the relationship don’t have anything of value to inherit.

The Bible teaches us that we were created for the purpose of having a relationship with our Creator. Anything short of that focus is doctrine based on error. If we could gain anything and claim every promise and not have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we would be unsatisfied. **Everything this life has to offer is worthless when placed in the eternal perspective.** Once this life is over, only what is founded on our relationship with God will remain. If we have intimacy with God, we are rich even in poverty, but if we have riches without God, we are destitute. Or as Jesus stated in Revelation 3:17-18, “Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. I Counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”

Many who claim riches are blind to their poverty because God is not their *shield and reward*. As with Abraham, our entire Christian life is founded on this principle or we have no foundation at all.

The power of Christianity is in the nature of the God we serve; yet most Christians barely understand God's true identity. Fortunately, God does not keep His identity a cosmic secret.

God does not play “hide-and-seek”, where the clues to His presence and nature are hidden behind distant planets or kept locked away in theological riddles. God has **announced Himself with an exclamation mark when Jesus Christ arrived on the earthly scene**, as seen in Colossians 1:15-19, “(Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.”

First of all, Christ reveals the image of God. Look at verse 15, “(Christ) is the image of the invisible God.”

The Bible teaches us that God is invisible, that He is inaccessible, and unknowable apart from Jesus Christ. A great many people are trying to find God through their intellect, or through their religion, or through nature, but the Bible plainly declares in John 1:18 that “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Jesus said this in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes

to the Father, except through Me.” Everything outside of Jesus Christ is just a guess when it comes to the knowledge of God, as seen in Matthew 11:27, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” **If I am to approach God, I must approach Jesus, for there is no other way to Him!**

I have talked to people about being saved, and they tell me things like, “I believe in God.” Or, “I believe in the God of the Old Testament.” **Listen, get this, to believe in God and not to believe in Jesus Christ is to commit the sin of idolatry!** For you cannot know the true God apart from a knowledge of Jesus Christ! I don’t care if you have the entire Old Testament memorized, and you might know all the prophets by their first name, but you cannot know God without knowing Jesus Christ!

Second, Christ reveals the creativeness of God. Look at verses 16-17, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be throngs, or dominions, or principalities, or powers - all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” The Bible says this in John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” Listen to Hebrews 1:1-3, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Jesus reveals God as the power of creation. John 1 says, “and

without him was not anything made that was made.” Therefore, let me remind you that the God of Genesis 1 is that little baby of Matthew 1, and that God whom the prophet Ezekiel saw in the holy city was the same Jesus who sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. And that Jesus who hung on the cross, was the God that created the tree from which the cross was made.

Jesus reveals God as preserver of creation. Colossians 1:17 says, “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” In other words, the Bible is teaching us that by Jesus all things are held together. Jesus is the “glue” of the universe!

Christ feeds the fuel to the sun, He drapes the moon in beauty, and He guides the planets on their journeys through the heavens. Every pulsation of my heart is done so under the divine direction of the Christ of creation. And if Jesus were to withdraw His hand, everything would fall backwards into chaos!

Today, we need to realize that Christ is the adhesiveness of all life, and when Christ is not first things start falling apart. We are witnessing the falling apart of our society, our educational system, our politics, and our nation, and it is all because we are leaving out the Christ of life. Today we are seeing the rapid growth of divorce in America, and the reason is that more and more young married people are trying to make their marriage work without the presence of Christ. But without Christ being first, there will never be any real adhesiveness in our homes, nor in our family lives!

Jesus reveals God as the purpose of creation. Verse 16b says, “...all things were created by him, and for him.” Everything that exists was made for Jesus Christ! That little word that has been translated “for” is the Greek word “eis” which literally means “motion towards an object.” The literal Greek would read this way,

“All things were created by him, and all things are moving towards him.” It is true that history runs in a cycle, for all creation runs in a cycle. Creation came from the hands of Jesus, and all creation will return to the hands of Jesus!

Someone has asked, “Where will it all stop?” I’ll tell you where it will all stop - at the foot of the Great White Throne Judgment! This world is headed for judgment!

Thirdly, Jesus reveals the God of recreation. Colossians 1:18a says, “And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead...” Notice that we have been told that Jesus is the “beginning.” The question is, “What is Jesus the beginning of?” The answer is, “Jesus is the beginning of a new race of people.” God started in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, but He gave up on them and brought about the flood. Then God started with Abraham and brought forth the Jews. But Jesus started a new race of people called the “church,” and to part a part of this race of people, one must be born again. If you miss this race, you have missed it all!

Let me remind you that God is still in charge of all the universe. Our government might become corrupt, our economy might become unstable, and sin might become rampant, but God is still in control, and He wants to control your life! But that is a choice that you must make for yourself.

“But,” you might be thinking, “what does all of this have to do with the covenant?” The answer to that question is given to us in Colossians 1:20, “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself - by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.” Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, “Do you not know that your body is the temple

of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body” and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

In His life Jesus revealed the *image of God*, but in His death Jesus revealed the *heart of God*. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Philippians 2:5-8 says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

There are three things told us in Scripture concerning the nature of God. **First**, John 4:24 tells us, “God is spirit.” **Second**, 1 John 1:5 tells us, “God is light.” **And third**, 1 John 4:8 tells us, “God is love.” **It is not simply that God loves, but that He is love itself.** Love is not merely *one of His attributes*, but *His very nature*.

The heart of God is a heart of love. In fact, *love starts and stops with God*. He is the Author, as seen in Jeremiah 31:3, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.” **And because He created it out of His very own nature it is unconditional.** The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:19, “We love Him, because He first loved us.” God has given us the *standard* and He desires that we *share* and *experience* this wonderful gift to humankind.

The Bible teaches that you and I were created so that God could express His love to us and we could respond with love. Because He is love, and because that is His very nature, He

wanted an object for His love. So He created man and woman. You and me.

When you think about it, our similarities to God are few. We are not *omniscient*, *omnipresent*, or *omnipotent*. But *God is love*, and He wants us to share that attribute with *Him* and with *others*. **What a marvelous privilege!** We are most like God when we love.

It is through Jesus Christ that we understand that God desires for us to experience life to it's fullest, as seen in John 10:10, "I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." I am reminded of the words found in Psalm 1:3, "And he will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

Have you ever wondered what is the most important part of the tree? The *leaves* with their beautiful fall colors? Is it the *trunk* that is thick and strong and huge like the California redwoods? Is it the *fruit* that is so delicious?

The most important part of the tree is the root system. It is here that the absorption of almost all of the *nutrients* and the *water* that is necessary for the growth of the tree takes place. The root system gives the tree stability during the winds and storms of life.

In like manner, so many people come to know God through Jesus Christ, but because they never learn to "put down roots," they are never able to mature spiritually. But Jesus said, "I have come to give you the abundant life."

The reason men beat their wives. The reason **children are molested.** The reason the **elderly are targets of deceit.** **The reason there is so much so-called “white collar” crime.** The reason **young people are turning to drugs,** and the reason over **600 young people are committing suicide every day,** is that we are trying to live without allowing God to become the steering force in our lives! The key to a meaningful life is found in Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all of these things shall be added unto you.”

Abraham was justified by his faith. He **believed** God. Today, **God’s promises** are **encouragements** to us. **There is not a need in your life that Christ cannot meet.** There is **no problem** that **Christ cannot solve.** There is **no difficulty in your life** that **Christ cannot overcome.**

But it is imperative that you are willing to give Him your **commitment!**