

## A summary of Genesis 15:1-7

- 1. Are we ready for the Lord's speaking? (Genesis 15:1-5).** Genesis 15:1-5 presents us with a record of maybe the fifth time that God appeared to Abraham. The first record is in Acts 7:2-3. The second is in Genesis 12:1-3. The third is in 12:7. The fourth is in 13:14-17. Interestingly, the fifth appearing of God results in Abraham's verbal response, and a subsequent dialogue, something that is missing, or not recorded, in the first four appearances. Why did God appear to Abraham and speak to him? If we look at each of the appearances, we will notice that each time God speaks to Abraham, Abraham responds. After the first appearing, Abraham left Ur of Chaldea. After the second appearing, he left Haran. After the third appearing at Shechem, he built an altar, and moved his tent between Bethel and Ai, and then built another altar and called upon the name of the Lord. After the fourth appearing, he moved his tent to Hebron, built an altar and eventually walked through the land with his service team to do battle with the four kings and rescue Lot. After the fifth appearing, Abraham finally interacted verbally with God and expressed a deep seated need that he had, in keeping with God's promise. This shows the growth of the person of Abraham, taking steps to respond to God. God was able to appear and speak to him because Abraham's person was ready for His speaking. What about us? Does God speak to us? Did God speak to us this morning, this afternoon, yesterday? When was the last time God spoke to us? And when God speaks to us, what do we do with His speaking? Do we respond? Abraham responded in a healthy way. If we do not respond, God may not speak again. The more we neglect God's speaking, the less likely we will be to respond when God, in His mercy, does speak. For example, it is very clear that the church is blessed through the prayers, especially the corporate prayers, of the church (Acts 1:14), as revealed to the Bible. This is God's speaking to us. Do we join the corporate prayers? If we do not, we may be disregarding God's speaking. In His mercy, God speaks again and again through His word and the brothers and sisters. Yet the more we disregard, the harder it will be to respond. To be ready for the Lords speaking is to respond in a healthy way to the Lord, by taking steps.
- 2. Do we have a healthy fear of not having a higher vision, and of being content with our spiritual growth? (15:1)** Of what was Abraham afraid? Had he not won a mighty victory over the four kings in chapter 14? Had he not rescued Lot? Had not Melchisedek (a type of Christ) met him after the victory and supplied him with bread and wine and blessed him? We may conjecture that Abraham could have been afraid of post-war repercussions, of reprisals from the defeated kings and their armies, or the general reaction of the other inhabitants of the land. After all, he only had 318 soldiers with him, compared perhaps with many more of the other surrounding tribes. Such reasons may be valid, yet we may consider a more deep-seated reason, one that may reflect the stage of spiritual growth at which Abraham had attained. Might he not have been afraid of possessing almost everything, both physically and spiritually? As we have just seen, he had followed God step by step, listening and responding. He had walked through the good land, not alone, but with a service team. He had built altars, not alone, but with his service team. He had received God's promise of his offspring being as the dust of the earth (13:16). What more could he want? What more could he do? Had he not reached the pinnacle of attainment? Yet deep inside, he may have sensed a lack, a sign of a brother or sister who is not satisfied. He may have had the inner question, "Lord, is this all?" He knew he did not yet have a child. This was a human need, a very proper need. There was something more that he needed. He needed to go higher, and he may have been afraid of remaining at the same level of life. Do we have such a fear? Or are we satisfied with where we are at? For example, we may come faithfully to the Lord's day gathering. We may praise and thank the Lord. We may participate in the corporate prayers. We may have spiritual companions. We may even pursue the Bible. We may even shepherd and be in the process of raising up pillars. We may offer one tenth of our income to the Lord. We may have an excellent church life! What more is there for us? Are we content, or do we have a fear of not advancing, of not having more visions and revelations? Eventually, if we do not have more visions and revelations, our Christian life will plateau, and we may very well fall into routine. Abraham may have had such a healthy fear. Therefore, God responded to him by appearing and showing him a vision, indicating that He was his shield and exceedingly great reward. This was a further revelation. For the first time, God revealed to him that He Himself was His reward, not his riches, not his spiritual pursuing, not the silver and gold that he acquired (the precious experiences of God and of His redemption), not the altars that he had built (his consecration and his praising and thanksgiving), not the tents that he had pitched, not the battle that he had won, not the one tenth that he had offered, not even the service team that he had raised up. Did Abraham understand? Probably not. Neither do we. His level of life was so high, yet he still needed a vision, and so do we, to see that God was his exceedingly great reward.

- 3. Our need, which may be God's need, may be expressed through intimate fellowship with the Lord (Genesis 15:1-5).** God had promised Abraham that his offspring would be as the dust of the earth. Yet Abraham had no child. This promise was made in 13:16, a good while after Abraham had left Ur. By this time, Abraham would have been in his eighties, at least. When God appeared to him a fifth time to reassure him that He was his shield and exceedingly great reward, Abraham expressed his heartfelt need of an offspring. He probably had such a need even before he had left Ur. However, this is the first time that Abraham expressed such a need, in response to a further vision that God gave him (15:1). Why did Abraham have such a freedom to dialogue with God for the first time? If we look at 15:5, we read that God brought him outside to show him the stars of the sky in order to compare their multiplicity with that of his eventual offspring. Thus we may infer that God visited Abraham and communed with him in his tent, which indicates that they both enjoyed intimate fellowship. It was in such an ambiance, fostered by intimacy and tenderness, that Abraham, for the first time, took the liberty to reveal a personal, human need hidden in the depths of his heart. Remarkably, such a human need was echoed by God in his response in 15:4, where he corrects Abraham's assumption that his chief servant Eliezar, no doubt one of his 318 trained men of his service team, would be his legitimate heir, and specifies that the real heir would be someone who would emanate from his own bowels. It was as if Abraham, almost unknowingly, as it were, touched the right chord of God's heart to provoke a resonating echo, causing both Abraham and God's need to be beautifully aligned. Do we enjoy such an intimacy with the Lord, and also with the brothers and sisters, that we can boldly voice our human needs and pray for them? In so doing, we may not realize that our human needs may indeed be the needs of God and the church. For example, we may pray for a job interview. That is a healthy human need. Yet God, and the church, also have such a need! If we do not have a job, how can we effectively serve the saints and the church? Eventually, we may realize that in our human life, all our legitimate human needs mirror God's needs, in order that He may gain our person and elevate our humanity in order that we might be consecrated to Him, depend on Him, and live Him out in the church life for His glory.
- 4. Do we believe the Lord? Our belief may be relative (Genesis 15:6).** God took Abraham outside and showed him the stars of the heaven, predicting that Abraham's offspring would be as numerous as them. Abraham believed the Lord. We may ask whether Abraham believed everything that God told him. Perhaps Abraham believed that he would have an offspring from his own bowels. Such an occurrence, although "impossible" at his age, according to human logic and reasoning, could very well have elicited belief on the part of Abraham. After all, this was the third time that God had promised him an offspring. But did Abraham believe that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars of the heaven? Hard to say. Such a promise may have been beyond the scope of Abraham's imagination and comprehension, as God Himself implies when He told Abraham to count the stars (if he could, implying that he could not!). This may show us that our believing, like Abraham, is relative. We believe what we experience, or what we understand (relatively speaking). For example, we believe in the Lord because we experience and touch Him in our spirit (though we may not be able to explain it). Yet when the Lord asks us to preach the gospel to our classmate, we may not believe that our speaking will have any effect. Or the Lord asks us to praise Him during the Lord's table gathering, and we do not believe that the church will be blessed through that. We believe the Lord in certain things, but not in other things. We need to grow in our believing, and remain with the Lord in the church life, to listen to the Lord speak to us, and to respond to Him, in order for our faith to grow.
- 5. None of us is righteous, but our belief in the Lord is counted by the Lord as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).** Romans 3:10 says that "none is righteous, no, not one." However, Genesis 6:9 says that Noah was a righteous man. Much later, in the New Testament, Matthew 1:19 says that Joseph was a righteous man. In Genesis 15:6, Abraham believed the Lord, and the Lord counted it (his believing) as righteousness. Is there a contradiction in the Bible? Romans 4:5 says that "to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness." We are all ungodly or unrighteous because sin resides in us. We are sinners by nature, and therefore we commit sinful deeds. Indeed, there is none righteous. However, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, God reckons that believing as righteousness. Believing, or faith, in the Lord Jesus, who is God's righteousness, is the only criterion that God accepts to reckon us righteous. Both Noah in the Old Testament and Joseph in the New Testament, along with many other servants of God, were called righteous based on their believing and their consequent actions. Thus, Noah believed God and built the ark. Joseph believed God and took Mary as his wife, in accordance with the angel of the Lord's speaking. Here, in Genesis 15:6, faith (believing) is connected with righteousness for the first time in the Bible, and such a correlation can be traced throughout the Bible as we examine the lives of men and women of God who exercised faith in God. Are we righteous? We are righteous inasmuch as we believe in the Lord and live a life of faith according to the Lord's speaking to us, and our response to Him.