

A summary of Genesis 15:7-21

- 1. Do we have intimate fellowship with the Lord and abide in fellowship with Him? (Genesis 15:7-8).** It is only in Genesis 15 that Abraham begins to enter into an intimate fellowship with the Lord and to dialogue with Him, and the Lord begins to reveal more details of what was on His heart. We see this in Abraham's second question: "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it (the land)?" in response to the Lord's declaration that it was He who had brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans. Abraham did not contradict God by telling Him that it was instead he, or his father Terah, who had left Ur. Rather, he recognized that God was the One who was in control, who had appeared to him and called him out. God also had the freedom to reveal this to Abraham for the first time. Both Abraham's question and God's revelation show us the intimacy that both of them enjoyed in fellowshiping with each other. Do we have such a subjective intimacy with the Lord, to ask Him questions, and also to ask brothers and sisters questions? Do we also realize that just as God brought Abraham out of Ur, it is God who gives us the ability to study diligently, it is God who gives us our good grades, it is God who gives us a job, and it is God who even gives us the ability to believe in Him and love Him. We have nothing to boast about. Such a realization arises through intimate fellowship with the Lord, through the Lord's speaking to us and our responding to Him, again and again. The psalmist, in Psalm 27:4, writes "One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple." Do we have such seeking, to dwell in the church life, never to leave the church life, even in unclear or uncertain situations, such as the one that we are currently experiencing with the spreading of the coronavirus? Do we gaze upon the beauty of the Lord? The Lord is so beautiful, especially in the brothers and sisters who live Him out and manifest His virtues and His operation. Do we ask the Lord many questions (inquire in His temple, that is, in the church life), specifically older brothers and sisters so we may know the Lord and appreciate His beauty more and more?
- 2. If we want to possess the land (Christ in us and in the saints, and also to exercise a ministry), do we offer what we have to the Lord (15:9-10)?** In response to Abraham's question of how he would know that he would inherit the land (v.9), God tells him to offer a heifer (a cow) three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon (v.10). What do these animals signify? If we go to Leviticus, we will see that either the heifer, or cow, or a bull (male) could be used to offer the peace offering to God (Leviticus 3:1). In order to offer the sin offering for the unintentional sin of a common person, a female goat was used (Leviticus 4:27). (For a more detailed understanding of the different types of sin offerings and animals involved, please read Leviticus 4). For the burnt offering, one of the animals that could be used, in addition to a bullock, was a ram (Leviticus 16:5). Each of these animals typify our experience of Christ: Christ as our peace offering, Christ as our sin offering, and Christ as our burnt offering. Interestingly, each of the first three offerings, in Abraham's case, consisted of animals which were three years old. Bible scholars generally agree that "three" signifies "resurrection." Continuing with our examination of the creatures involved in Abraham's offering, we finally come to the last two offerings, and the smallest: one turtledove and one pigeon. In Leviticus 1:14, either a turtle dove or a pigeon was to be used if the offeror was too poor (Leviticus 14:21-22) to afford a bull or a ram. What does this mean to us? If we want to possess Christ, that is the Christ in us and the Christ in the saints, we need to offer what we have, or rather what the Lord has given us. For example, the Lord has given us a job. We can offer, or sanctify, that job to the Lord. Our realization should be, "Lord, the job I have was given to me by You, not just so that I can have a job and live comfortably to satisfy my needs and my family's needs, but rather to satisfy You. My job is for the church life. Yes, I need a job to live a proper human life. But my life and my purpose are not for my job." As we enter into such a realization, we may experience Christ as our burnt offering in our job in our daily church life. In a sense, we are willing to put our job on the cross, in order to experience the death and resurrection of Christ. Any brother or sister, regardless of the level of life, can offer what they have. Are we more mature? We may offer a ram. Are we young in the divine life? We may offer a turtledove and a young pigeon. No one need despise their offering, neither should anyone despise another's offering. We offer what we can and have, based on what the Lord has given us, and based on our level of maturity and growth in the divine life. Interestingly, Abraham not only offered the cow, the female goat and the ram, but he also divided them in half. However, he did not divide the birds. This may mean that the mature believers, relatively speaking, need, and are ready, for their offering to be cut in half, that is, to experience death. However, the less mature ones may not be required yet to experience such a cutting. For example, we may offer our job to the Lord. We may tell the Lord that our time is for him. We work forty hours a week, or even more, but our weekends and some evenings are available to preach the gospel, to accompany the saints, to open our home. Then the Lord may speak to us further. What about the income we receive from our job? Are we willing to offer one tenth, or even more, to the Lord as our financial grace

offering? This is the cutting of our offering in half. Yes, we offered our job the first time. But now that very job, with its income, needs to be cut in half. This is not easy. Many saints offer their time and energy, but the hardest thing to offer is our money. However, the relatively younger ones in the divine life, including the writer, in a sense, are exempt from the dividing. These are the pigeons who can easily fly away when there are difficulties in the way, or when the Lord speaks a hard word to us. We may be “cows” or “rams” in certain areas, but “pigeons” in other areas. We say we love the Lord, and the Lord loves to hear us say that, but He knows that we will fly away at the first hard word we hear! Does this mean that we are exempt? No! On the one hand, we offer according to our growth in life. On the other hand, we should not be content with our growth of life, or with a “little” or “slow” growth. The Bible never speaks of “slow” growth, nor does it speak of “fast” growth. Do we want to grow to the point where we are willing for our offering to be divided, like Abraham, who was so submissive to the Lord, and demonstrated a high level of maturity of life?

- 3. Satan, with all his fallen angels, will try his best to strip us of our trust in the Lord and to keep us in the world (Genesis 15:11).** Abraham did not just offer to God, but he had to drive away the birds of prey that swooped down on the carcasses of his offering (15:9). Satan and his fallen angels, symbolized by the birds of prey, will swoop down on us, on our offering, on our consecration, to try to keep us in the world. They will tell us that the job that we have was because of our diligence or our intelligence, or just “good luck.” They will try to rob us of our trust in the Lord. Usually, however, such an “attack” is couched in very sweet terms. Well-intentioned people may “sweet talk” us into thinking that we don’t really have to attend the church gatherings that diligently, or praise the Lord that much. For example, “it’s okay to get a job that occupies you on Sunday. After all, you are working hard to support your family, and you need to. It’s okay not to come to the Lord’s table meeting for the next four months. Be patient. Wait on the Lord.” Sometimes, it is easy to listen to such talk and even agree. Actually, such talk often comes from within ourselves, as we will see in the next point. No one is to blame. Abraham was bold to drive away such speaking or thoughts. Are we that bold? Do we stop such a kind of speaking? No, it is not right for a child of God to be tied up every Sunday and unable to praise the Lord, unable to be with brothers and sisters. Do we drive away the birds of prey that threaten to rob us of the precious experiences of Christ?
- 4. The Lord is the One who makes a covenant with us because we are weak, and there are many things inside us which are fleshly and natural and which need to be chased away (Genesis 15:18-21; 1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chronicles 9:26).** Abraham did not make a covenant with God, but God made a covenant with Abraham (15:18). God, the One with power, made a covenant with Abraham, the one who was weak. In the covenant, God promised that He would give Abraham’s seed the land from the river of Egypt (the Nile) to the Euphrates (v.18). This was actually fulfilled much later during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chronicles 9:26). This indicates the Lord’s faithfulness to fulfill His promise. We are not faithful. However, the covenant is not entirely one-sided. In making a covenant to give Abraham’s seed the land, God further defined the land as containing ten tribes (v.19-21). We know from Deuteronomy 7:1 that God promised to clear the land of seven tribes. In Deuteronomy 7:2, God continues to instruct the children of Israel to defeat the tribes and devote them to complete destruction. What do these ten tribes represent? These are not people outside of us, but rather our very person, with its flesh and natural life that must be crucified. God has no delight in our flesh and what our flesh can produce. If we want to gain the good land, we must drive out the tribes within us, that frustrate us from giving ourselves to Christ and the church. To serve the church is not at all easy. All the saints around us, including ourselves, carry the ten tribes with them. For example, our good intentions to help people find a job or live a more comfortable life without depending on the Lord, without praying to and praising and thanking the Lord, can be tribes within us that need to be destroyed and chased away by our taking the cross. We are sinners by nature, and God knows very well that we are sinners. Thus He makes a covenant with us. At the same time, we must actively deal with many of the fleshly things that prevent His promise from being fulfilled in us.
- 5. In order for us to possess the land, we need to be perfected through fire and high temperatures (Genesis 15:17).** When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces of Abraham’s offering (v.17). The smoking fire pot may signify the intense heat that the Lord went through during His life on the earth, especially during His death on the cross. The flaming torch signifies Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12). He was the first one to pass through this process. We also have to go through the same process in order to gain and possess Him and participate in His operation to build up the church. How can we be perfected? We also need the high temperatures and intense heat of the experience of the cross to deal with the ten tribes that control our person. At the same time, as we experience the death of our natural man, we can also experience the resurrection of Christ, typified by the flaming torch that begins to lead us through the furnace. The life of Christ slowly becomes a little light within us to lead us higher. Without His light as our leading, we could never pass through the smoking pot of the church life. Praise the Lord that we can experience both His death (the smoking pot) and His resurrection (a flaming torch) to equip us to be perfected to gain the good land.