

# 17-18 Bible Study #25

4 17 18

# Genesis 15

# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- **Genesis 15:1-2**

- **1<sup>st</sup> promise – Land (Genesis 15:1-2; 18-21)**
- We just witnessed God serving as *Abram's* shield when he went forth with 318 shepherds and conquered four mighty kings with chariots
- *Abram* could not have gone up to *Dan* and defeated his enemies on his own (God was with him)
- But after the victory *Abram* responded to God, “so what if I have all of this wealth and become a mighty warrior, I still have no son!”
- He told God that the only children he had were those he had purchased from the auction block
- Although he liked *Eliezer of Damascus* his slave, it would have been nice to have a son via *Sarai* \*

# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- Genesis 15:3-6
  - The dilemma of “no offspring” and its fulfillment in his ***righteousness*** will come up over and over again
  - It is even discussed by *Paul* in his letter to the **Romans**, and **Galatians** as well as the book of **James** \*<sub>1</sub>
  - *Paul* states that “**righteousness**” does not come through “circumcision” or the “Law of Moses”
    - *The Law will not arrive for another 500 years*
    - *Thus, Abram cannot be called “righteous” due to his observance of the Law*
    - *The Kosher laws will only come in Exodus and Leviticus*

# Definitions

- **Righteousness:**

- The quality of being morally right or justifiable
- The state of moral perfection required by God to enter heaven
- In Old Testament it was one who obeyed the Torah (Phil 3:6)

- **Justification:**

- To set something right, or to declare righteous
- To be made righteous, just, holy and acceptable to God – from a state of sin to a state of grace

# Definitions (Cont)

- **Justifying Faith** - According to Paul:
  - That faith of the convert that leads to **Baptism**
  - How a man is brought from sin to salvation
- **Works** – According to Paul
  - ***Works of the Mosaic Law*** (Torah)
  - No one can earn or merit the free gift of grace by obedience to the Torah
  - None of the tenants of the Torah, apart from the grace of Christ, can bring about justification of the sinner

# Romans 3

- Here, Paul is contrasting the **works of the Law** versus **faith in Jesus** and the New Covenant
- When Paul refers to **works of the Law**, he is talking about one putting his faith in Moses and the Torah (*Circumcision and the Kosher Laws*)
- Faith in the Torah would not save them
- But if they put their faith in Jesus and the New Covenant, nothing else was needed for salvation
- As we know the Jews in the Church of Rome kept telling the Gentiles that they had to add circumcision and Kosher to be saved
- This meant that they did not trust in Jesus and the New Covenant for salvation

# Romans 3

- ***Good works are:***
  - Works that are in accord with the will of God
  - Things that further sanctify a person
  - The manifestation of God's Spirit within
  - Things that one does on the other side of the baptismal font
- After coming out of the baptismal font one has been saved and now walks in that salvation in the ways of Jesus
- **It is not that “good works” save us, but that we participate in our salvation by doing these things**



# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- Paul also had to address the issue of “circumcision” which was addressed by the Council of Jerusalem in **Acts 15**
- Obviously “circumcision” had nothing to do with Abram’s righteousness (identified in **Genesis 15:6**) as he was not circumcised until **Genesis 17:24**
- Paul uses this argument as he tried to counter the Judaizers movement in Galatia and Rome
- The “Judaizers” problem will remain throughout Salvation History
- A proper understanding of this passage as a universal covenant is critical for Catholic apologists
- It, unfortunately, was misunderstood by Martin Luther and his followers \*

# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- **Genesis 15:7-12**

- *Abram* asked the Lord how he could possibly possess this land since he no sons?
- He questioned how he would see descendants as numerous as the stars?
- God called *Abram* to cut in half a series of animals for sacrifice along with a number of birds
- He then directed *Abram* to walk between them as a sign of a Covenantal ceremony
  - At this point let us look at a similar covenantal ceremony in Jeremiah 34:18 \*<sub>2</sub>

# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- **Genesis 15:13-16**

- Obviously this passage in **Genesis** is talking about the 400 years the Hebrew people will live in *Egypt* (the land of *Ham*)
- A look at **Deuteronomy 9:1-7** and **2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 21:10-12** will give us an understanding into when the people of *Israel* will become like those pagan (*Amorite*) people in the land that they pushed out
- The word “Amorites” (a nation from Ham) is often used in a general sense for the people of the land
- “Canaanite” is often used in the same way

# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- So, *Abram* complied and vigilantly protected the carcasses of the slain animals and birds from the vultures
- He then fell into a deep sleep and heard from the Lord \*

# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- **Genesis 15:17-21**

- Here we see the imagery of God passing through the halved animals as His commitment to the Covenantal promise that *Abram's* “descendants will inherit this land”
- Look at the imagery here and think of the **Exodus** story of the *Hebrew* people being led at night by “a pillar of fire” (**Exodus 13:21**)
  - “a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces”

# Genesis 15 (Cont)

- The boundaries of the land that God gave to *Abram* stretched from the *Euphrates River* all the way to *Egypt*
- This was most of the “Fertile Crescent”
- This land mass will only belong to *Israel* at the time of *Solomon* when he receives taxes all the way from the people of *Mesopotamia*

# Genesis 16

# Genesis 16

- **Genesis 16:1-2a**

- This section starts this way because **Genesis 15** ended with a question concerning how many descendants *Abram* will have
- It begins with the question concerning where are these kids going to come from since *Sarai* was barren
- A possible solution was offered through *Sarai's Egyptian* maid named *Hagar*
- As we read this story to this point it seems as though something is wrong



# Genesis 16 (Cont)

- All the way through the story we have seen that polygamy was wrong
  - The evil *Lamech* was in contrast to the righteous *Enoch*
  - The evil outcome of the sons of God (from *Enoch*) marrying several of the daughters of men
  - After the flood we hear about the polygamist *Pharaoh* taking *Sarai* into his harem
- This made it pretty clear that what *Sarai* was offering *Abram* (polygamy) was not a good idea

# Genesis 16 (Cont)

- As one reads the story on its surface it seems like this was the way to go
- But Father Sebastian pointed out that if you read it carefully you will see that the author was demonstrating that this was **not** the expected path God wanted *Abram* to follow
- This was not the pattern chosen by God

# Genesis 16 (Cont)

- **Genesis 16:2b-6**

- “And *Abram* **harkened** to the voice of *Sarai*”
- We heard that language before in **Genesis 3:17** where God says to *Adam*, “Because you have **listened** to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’...”
- Here we are hearing an echo of the earlier verse
- This was the first experiment of polygamy among the patriarchs
- Again we can see that this was not God’s plan

# Genesis (Cont)

- Who could have predicted this jealousy between these two women?
- Once again we are seeing Covenantal language
- Their marriage was on the rocks!

# Genesis 16 (Cont)

- **Genesis 16:7-8**

- The angel was not asking *Hagar* where she was going
- Again, a flashback to Adam hiding from God in the garden (**Genesis 1:8**)
- This teaching concerns the relevance of *Hagar* and *Ismael*
  - Shouldn't she be free?
- Remember that the slaves of *Abram* had been given their freedom and were seen as members of his household
- Many of them even fought for Abram against the four kings
- All of the men will be circumcised when *Abram* receives the Covenant in **Genesis 17**

# Genesis 16 (Cont)

- Look at the tragedy here as *Sarai* takes a freed slave and turns her into a concubine for *Abram*
- This was about *Hagar's* identity, her salvation
- That is why the angel asks her where she came from and where was she going
- Did she think that after leaving *Egypt* as a slave and having been given her freedom, she could go back to *Egypt* as a pregnant unwed slave?
- How could she survive alone in the wilderness?
- Things will not get any better for her by fleeing

# Genesis 16 (Cont)

- **Genesis 16:9-16**

- *Ishmael* means “God hears”
- He will become the father of the 12 tribes of Arabia
- Also, look at the fact that *Abram* is now 86 years old as this is 10 years after he came out of Palestine

# Genesis 17



# Genesis 17

- **Genesis 17:1-11**

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Promise - Royal Dynasty**

- Name changed from Abram to Abraham
    - Circumcision was the sign of new covenant
  - *Abram* was 99 years old!
  - God identified Himself as “God Almighty” meaning “all powerful” who can do anything
  - “Between you and me” is Covenantal language
  - We heard that language from God to *Noah* in the rainbow promise (**Genesis 9:12**)

# Genesis 17 (Cont)

- We also heard about the “Covenant” in **Genesis 15:18**
- There will be a great deal of repetition from **Genesis 15** to these stories in **Genesis 17**
- *Sarai and Abram* experimented with a concubine as a means of solving the problem of *Sarai’s* bareness in their own way
- This act was the possible driving force behind the repetition of the story of Abram’s earlier interlude to Egypt
  - *In **Genesis 15** after arriving in the land Abram has a little interlude to Egypt which produced nothing but trouble and ended with his being back where he began*
  - *Here in **Genesis 17** Abram made an interlude with Hagar resulting in nothing but problems and him being back where he started*

# Genesis 17 (Cont)

- God promised Abram three things:
  - That he will be father of a multitude of people (stars and seashore)
  - He will be given land as a place for his descendants to live
  - Through his descendants will come one who will bless the world

# Genesis 17 (Cont)

- In **Exodus 16** *Abram* and *Sarai* tried to solve their problem “man’s way” through this unfortunate experiment
- In **Exodus 17**, we see the restoration of the problem to “God’s way”
- To point out that something was wrong with “man’s way” you hear words like “God Almighty”, “God all powerful” instead of the words like “God the protector,” “the shield”
- This new language was in response to the question, “Can God ever make *Sarai* fertile?”
- *Abram* must have thought that God needed his help to bring about the fulfilment of His promise

# Exodus 17 (Cont)

- Thus, in **Exodus 17** God gave *Abram* the covenant of circumcision \*<sub>2</sub>
- Although circumcision was something found in many cultures including Egyptian, it did not originate with *Abraham*
- There are two schools of thought on its meaning in the Abrahamic narrative
  - One proposes that since *Abram* was acting like an Egyptian by beginning a harem, keeping and mistreating slaves, he was going to have to walk like an *Egyptian*
  - The other points out that circumcision was a positive thing, and throughout the rest of history the people of Israel will see it as a sign of God's covenant

# Genesis 17 (Cont)

- The second option is true, but the “cross” can also be seen as the sign of the New Covenant
  - Yet, the killing of Jesus by crucifixion was a bad thing
  - In Peter’s first speech after the resurrection he condemns the Jews for crucifying the Messiah
  - But God raised him from the dead, making the cross the sign of salvation, the sign of the New Covenant