

# A Covenant to Make the Promise Sure

Genesis 15:7-21

Halifax: 10 May 2015

## **Introduction:**

Today we return to our sermon series in Genesis.

- The previous two sermons in this series have been from Genesis 15 where we found Abram (later called Abraham) struggling after his victorious deliverance of Lot.

Do you remember the circumstances?

- In an act of great faith,
  - Abram had gone to rescue his nephew Lot as soon as he heard that he had been taken captive by a coalition of kings that could best be described as bullies.
- I do not have time to go into the details if you missed that sermon,
  - but Abram had rounded up his trained servants—318 of them to be exact—and had led them in a surprise attack upon these kings by night.
  - The kings ran away and Abram recovered Lot as well as all of the loot these kings had taken from the kingdoms (which were city-states) that they had attacked.
- Abram had then been led by godly Melchizedek to give praise and thanks to God for this victory and had resisted enriching himself with a share of the spoils to which he was entitled—
  - lest he be allied with the wicked king of Sodom.
  - It was a very successful campaign in every respect in which Abram had clearly honoured the LORD and experienced the Lord's strong arm of deliverance.

But in the aftermath of it all, we saw that Abram experienced what people often experience after a great victory—a time of struggle...

- But we saw that the LORD came to him in the midst of this struggle and told him not to be afraid because He would be Abram's shield and that his reward would be very great.
- Perhaps Abram was afraid that the kings he had subdued would return to take vengeance on him.
  - He had taken them by surprise, but they were powerful kings and it would be a very different matter to meet them when they were set in battle array!
  - That may have been part of his struggle, but we find that he was also struggling with God's yet unfulfilled promises to him...
    - We will look at this struggle more after our scripture reading...
    - And then we will look at how God shows him that it will be a very long time before the promise is fulfilled...
    - But also goes to great lengths to assure Abram that He, the LORD Almighty, will fulfill the promises He has made to him.

So let's move on to our scripture reading in Genesis 15.

- Even though our text is from verse 7 to the end of the chapter, I want to read the entire chapter because it is a unified passage...
  - So please give me your attention as I read to you from the precious word of the living God—beginning with Genesis 15:1.

**Genesis 15:1-21:** 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.”<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?”<sup>3</sup> Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup> And he said, “Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?”<sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.<sup>12</sup> Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.<sup>15</sup> Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.<sup>16</sup> But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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—<sup>19</sup> the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites,<sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,<sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

May the LORD bless to us the reading of His holy Word.

Now I want to remind you that Abram is presented to us in scripture as the father of all believers—the father of those who are saved by believing the promises of God.

- Last time we zeroed in on verse 6 where we are told that Abram believed in the LORD and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
  - I showed you how this is quoted several times in the New Testament and referred to as what every person must do who would be saved...
    - God's promise, in its essence (both to us and to Abram), is the promise of a kingdom of righteousness that God establishes in this sinful world.

- We are all lost in sin by the fall of Adam,
  - And the only way we or anybody else can be reconciled to God is by looking to God Himself to deliver us.
  - He is the one who establishes the kingdom of righteousness for the salvation of all His people.
    - Setting up this kingdom and gathering people into it is a process that God has carried out over the centuries and is still carrying out today.

Six thousand years ago, He promised to Adam and Eve (just after the fall) that a son born of woman would be the founder of this kingdom...

- Four thousand years ago, He promised it to Abram, and said that the kingdom would come through his seed and be a blessing to all the families of the earth.
- Three and half thousand years ago, He renewed the promise to Moses and through him to all Israel.
- Three thousand years ago, He renewed the promise to David, and promised that David's Son would be the one born of woman who would establish this kingdom.
- Two thousand years ago, the Son of David, the Son of Abram, the Son born of a virgin, came and *did* establish that kingdom...
  - He was the first one after the fall to be righteous in this sinful world, so He is the firstborn of this kingdom...the head and king of all.
    - And He also went to the cross to pay the penalty of sin so that others who were not righteous could be forgiven and brought into the kingdom of righteousness...
    - And He poured out His Spirit whose sanctifying work first enables them to repent and enter the kingdom by faith, and then perfects them until His work is complete on the day of resurrection at the end of the world.
      - It is not until then that all of the promises concerning this kingdom will be fulfilled (until the kingdom fully comes), and so, as Jesus said, we must go through much tribulation before we enter the kingdom.
  - So all through the ages, God's people have struggled, waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled.
    - And all through the ages, God has been faithful to reassure them of His promises in their struggles.
    - For us, He does that by bringing the promises in His word home to our hearts, such as the promises we have before us today in Genesis 15...
      - For Abram, God actually confirmed these promises in the way that is set before us in this passage.
- So I encourage you to take a good look at this passage and be encouraged!
  - Through it, God's Spirit gives God's people assurance that He will do what He has promised, but not until we first go through many struggles and difficulties.
  - Let's take a look and see what there is for us to learn here...

**I. First, as God's people, we struggle with promises that remain unfulfilled like Abram did.**

A. We see Abram's struggle here in our text.

1. God had promised to multiply him greatly, to make him a great nation, a kingdom of righteousness that would be blessed of God...
  - But Abram did not even have a son yet.
  - How could he become a great nation by himself? How could he become a kingdom if he had no offspring?
    - And so in verse 2 & 3, as we saw in a previous sermon, he asked God how this is to come about...
      - Was his chief servant to be his heir?
      - It was a very reasonable question to ask.
    - And we saw that the LORD answered him and told him that his servant was not to be the heir, but that he would have a son, born from his own body...
      - And then, you will remember, God showed him the stars in the sky and promised that He would make his descendants like the stars in the heavens!
      - God who had made all of those stars and placed them in the heavens would have no problem giving Abram descendants!
        - It was a great encouragement for him.
2. But in today's text, starting with verse 7, God brings up the related matter of the inheritance of the land.
  - a. It seems that God does this because He perceives that Abram is also struggling with how he could possibly inherit this vast land.
    - The Lord brings it up because He intends to strengthen Abram's faith.
    - The land was already full of inhabitants and there was no indication that they were thinking of leaving any time soon or that Abram was in a position to remove them...
      - Even if he could, he did not have nearly enough people to fill such a large tract of land.
  - b. We see that for whatever reasons, Abram is indeed wrestling with God's promise to give him the land because he asks God to give him some assurance of the promise.
    - This is entirely appropriate given the circumstances.
    - It is far better to ask the LORD for confirmation than it is go on doubting.
      - The LORD has graciously given us His written word and His sacraments to support our faith, and we are to make use of these to give us faith and patience that we may inherit the promises.

- c. By bringing this up so that Abram asks about it, we can see how eager the LORD is to strengthen the faith of His people—to prepare them for the struggle they will have to face.
    - The LORD delights in strengthening the faith and patience of His people, and what He does here is not only intended to strengthen the faith and patience of Abram, but also the strength and patience of all who come after him and read or hear this account.
    - The covenant God establishes with Abram here is not only for the benefit of Abram, but also for the benefit of all who come after him—including each one of you who believe today.
- B. We also struggle with assurance of promises that seem to never be fulfilled.
1. Yes, we have an advantage in that we can look back and see how God fulfilled the promise to multiply Abram and give him the land,
    - and we can even look back and see how He fulfilled the promise to send Jesus to establish God's righteous kingdom, and how He took away His people's sins by His death on the cross...
    - We can see how He had been gathering people from all over the world just as He promised...
      - but we still struggle with what is yet unfulfilled.
  2. We also find ourselves waiting long for the fulfillment of His promise to gather in all of His elect,
    - a. Sometimes it seems like we are losing ground...
      - we wait long for Him to crush the head of Satan and all who are in league with him,
      - we wait long for the resurrection at the last day and for the removal of the curse.
    - b. We see the church oppressed, mocked, persecuted, wilting in weakness, and we see so little progress in our own walk and in the walk of those around us—so little fruit.
    - c. Do you not find that you grow impatient when you do not see God working?
      - Do you begin to doubt that He will ever work?
      - Do you begin to give up on prayer?
      - Do you become careless or cranky or frustrated in your walk?
  3. When this is so, you need to go to the LORD for reassurance.
    - a. Passages like this one in Genesis 15 where the LORD graciously affirms His promises are for you.
    - b. Do not go on in your doubts—go to the LORD and ask Him to make His promises sure to you!
      - As long as you are not coming in pride, looking for an excuse for your unbelief, the LORD will gladly meet you with His promises to shore up your faith!

**II. The Lord graciously sets out to affirm His promises to us, but first He makes sure that we understand that there will be a lot more waiting and suffering before His promises are fulfilled.**

A. You see that He calls Abram to prepare for a covenant ritual.

- This is how He prepares to make a covenant promise to Abram...
- 1. In verse 9, He says, **“Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”**
  - These were animals that were used for sacrificing—and at three years of age, they are at the prime of life.
  - The ritual in view is one that Abram seems to be familiar with—the ritual was called “the making (or more literally *the cutting*) of a covenant”...
    - I say that Abram was familiar with it for two reasons,
      - One, because there is evidence that this was a common procedure for two parties to enter into a covenant,
      - And two, because Abram knows just what to do—verse 10 says,
        - **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.**
- 2. The way this was done, ordinarily, is that the two parties would make promises to each other—a covenant agreement—and then walk between the divided animals.
  - In doing so, they were taking an oath so as to say, “Let God do to me as has been done to these animals if I do not do all that I have promised.”
    - It was a way of talking an oath of malediction—of asking God to curse you if you did not keep your promise.
  - Cutting a covenant like this is referred to in Jeremiah 34:17-20.
    - There, we see God bringing a curse on His people for their failure to keep the covenant that they had made (or cut as it literally was said):
    - This is what it says in Jeremiah 34:17-20:
      - **Jeremiah 34:17-20: “Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor. [They had vowed to set those they had made slaves free, but had not kept their promise...so in a note of sarcasm, the Lord says:] Behold, I proclaim liberty to you,’ says the LORD—‘to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine! And I will deliver you to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth. ‘And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it—‘the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf—‘I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.’”**

- So you see that they were under greater obligation because they had cut a covenant, passing between the pieces. The Lord is holding them to it.

TRANS> So in our text, the LORD is doing something amazingly gracious here...

- He is getting ready to cut a covenant with Abram—to make His promise more sure to Him, it would seem by passing between the pieces and taking an oath of malediction—
    - It is a great act of condescension for God to do this—He does it because of His great love for His people and because of His desire to make His promise sure.
- B. But first He wants to make it very clear to Abram (and to us) that His promise will not be fulfilled until after a long hard struggle!
1. First, He reveals the struggle in a symbolic way...giving special signs of coming struggles in the way He proceeds in the cutting of this covenant...
    - I am not referring to the signs that were a normal part of cutting the covenant, but special signs that are unique to this cutting of this covenant...
      - It is all unique to us, but there are two things that are unique to the way the ceremony was ordinarily done that point to coming struggle...
- a. First, there is the long delay in walking between the pieces.
    - Ordinarily when two men were making a covenant, they divided the animals and got on with it!
    - But in the case, the animals are divided and God does not do anything.
      - Abram waits and waits...so long that the birds of prey begin to come to eat the carcasses.
        - They threaten to destroy the assurance that would come to Abram through this ritual by preventing the ritual from occurring.
      - Abram has to struggle to keep them away—
        - Just as he will have to struggle long after the covenant is made as enemies and circumstances will try to take the promise away—to cause him to forget it!
        - And just as you have to struggle to hold on to God’s promise when delay and trials and lack of progress work together to cause you to grow weary and tempt you to give up.
          - It is powerful symbolism—the birds of prey attack God’s promises and we have to chase them away!
  - b. Second, there is, unique to this ritual, the nightfall...
    - Usually, this ritual would certainly be done in the day...
    - And in addition to nightfall, Abram is brought into a deep sleep, followed by what is called “a horror and great darkness” that fell upon him.
      - It is impossible for us to know just what this entailed, but the language clearly indicates that it was quite a dreadful experience.

- We could compare it to Jonah in the belly of the fish, descending into the depths, enclosed in the darkness.
  - Even more, we could compare it to Christ on the cross when the darkness fell and horror came upon all...
  - It represents a time when there are no tangible evidences of God's promise being fulfilled—but just the opposite...
    - It is a time when you walk in darkness and have no light.
    - You are enveloped with horror or fear and darkness...
      - Where you are entirely shut up to the mercy of God.
      - Where you can do nothing but cry out to Him for some token of His grace!
- That is how the LORD reveals the long hard struggle through the ritual itself.
2. But He also reveals the struggle that Abram and His people must pass through before the promise is fulfilled by *describing* the trouble that is going to come.
- a. He tells of a four hundred year period of affliction that must be borne!
- In Genesis 15:13-14, it says: **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. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”**
  - Four hundred years!
    - That is how long it will be until the LORD brings Abram's descendants out of Egypt so that they can then go to conquer the Canaanites and take the land—
    - He doesn't even reveal how long *that* will take—or that it will be another 2000 years before the seed of the woman comes to establish His kingdom...
      - and that He Himself will suffer on the cross (the crushing of His heel promised in Genesis 3:15) and that after that the people of His kingdom will continue to suffer in the world for at least 2000 more years!
  - But four hundred years of affliction—that is a long time!
    - The first European settlement in Canada was Acadia—and that was roughly 400 years ago...
    - God makes it clear to Abram that he is going to be long gone before his descendants even begin to inherit the land where God's kingdom is to be established...
      - In verse 15 it says, **Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.**
    - And then in verse 16, the LORD speaks of their return to the land to take the land...**“But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”**



- Notice here that the LORD has no intention of removing the Canaanites until their iniquities fully warrant it.
  - Already, they were very wicked, but God's extreme patience with them gives them another 400 years before He destroys them.
- b. But we might well ask what good this promise is to Abram!
  - What good is it to him if his descendants inherit the land after 400 years of affliction?
    - What good is it to all the ones who live and die under that affliction without any benefits of the promised inheritance?
  - It is only good for Abram and them if they see that this is all part of God's promise to establish His righteous kingdom,
    - a kingdom that Abram will be a part of for all eternity.
    - Hebrews 11 explains that Abram and the other Old Testament saints were looking for a city whose builder and maker was God that was eternal in the heavens.
      - It was a kingdom which none of them obtained in this present world...
      - It is a kingdom that is gathered here and a kingdom that is founded here in this present world, but it is not complete until the last day when Jesus returns, the day that we are all waiting for...both we and those who have gone before us.
  - What Paul says of himself and the other apostles in 1 Corinthians 15 is just as true of Abram as it is of Paul...and of us who believe today!
    - **1 Cor 15:16-19: For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup> Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.**

TRANS> So you see that there is to be a great struggle in this world until the kingdom fully comes!

- C. My brothers and sisters, this is not something to be fuzzy about!
- A lot of Christians are fuzzy about it.
  - 1. You need to learn this lesson that God impresses upon Abram here in Gen 15!
    - Do not expect a life of ease and comfort in this world!
      - We are not in glory until Jesus returns.
      - Many of us have a great deal of comfort, but do not be surprised if suffering and hardship come.
        - Many of our Christian brothers and sisters are suffering greatly for their faith today...
    - Do not grow weary in your service to the LORD.
      - As we read in Hebrews 6, it is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises.

- Now we must wrestle to hold on to the promises of God!
    - We must set our affections and the things above and not on the things of the earth.
    - We must be willing to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.
    - We must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus.
2. Jesus and His apostles give us many warnings about the need for patience when the LORD delays His coming.
- Jesus tells of the ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom, five of which were not prepared because they expected Him to come right away.
    - In Luke 12:45-46, He warns of those servants who say, **‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.**
  - And of course there is the famous warning of Peter about scoffers who come in the last days and say,
    - **2 Pet 3:4: Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.**
3. It is after we have patiently endured that we will inherit the promises...
- Hebrews 6:15 says of Abram, **And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.**
  - Like Moses, he endured as seeing Him who is invisible (Heb 11:27) and like Jesus, for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross (Heb 12:2).
  - Therefore, you are called to **“consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls (Heb 12:3).”**
    - That is what is necessary if you are going to endure to the end.
    - Many turn away, but we desire better things of you!

TRANS> And so, after making it clear that the promise will not come until after much suffering, the Lord now affirms His promise to Abram...

### **III. See how the LORD affirms His promise by entering into a covenant in which He promises to do all that is required!**

- A. What God promises here was something that only He could do—Abram could not do it.
1. Abram could not even carry out the next few stages of the coming kingdom.
    - It was beyond him—he would be long dead before his descendants multiplied and long before they inherited the land...
    - And that was just the beginning of all that must happen for God to establish the righteous kingdom that He had promised that would be a blessing to Abram and to all the families of the earth!
    - Jesus would have to come in our flesh and live a righteous life!

- He would have to die on the cross!
- He would have to be raised for our justification!
- He would have to pour out His Holy Spirit on the church!
- He would have to gather the nations in to His kingdom by the gospel!
- He would have to return in power and glory to judge the world and cast out the wicked.
- He would have to raise us from the dead with glorified bodies and bring us to a glorified earth.

2. Yes, there are bits that Abram has to do...

- Abram had to believe the promises and he had to leave his homeland and come to Canaan...
- And he had to bring forth Isaac, though it was beyond his ability, just as we have to bring forth children for God's kingdom though it is beyond our ability...
  - And it is ours to take the gospel to the nations...but it is only God who gives the increase...
    - But the great work that Christ has done and has yet to do is well beyond us...
      - just as it was beyond Abram to inherit Canaan!

TRANS> Make sure you get that straight—it is God who brings in the kingdom—not us.

B. And here in Genesis 15, I want you to see that God has bound Himself to do this by cutting a covenant!

1. He does something extraordinary here!

- a. As I mentioned before, the normal practice was that both parties passed through the divided animals,
  - thereby taking an oath of malediction—binding themselves to a curse if they do not do what they have promised.
  - Normally the parties making the covenant passed through the divided pieces together.
- b. Now you might expect that the LORD would not do this at all—for He is God!
  - How could He take an oath of malediction when there is no one to hold Him to it—when it is not possible from Him to die...
    - And besides, His word needs no confirmation.
    - He is God and it is impossible for Him to lie.
- But look at what He does! Not only does He pass through, but...
- c. He passes between the parts alone!
  - He alone takes on the obligation of the covenant all by Himself!
  - He appears by a symbol as a clay pot type of oven with a burning torch and He passes between the parts alone...

- That is what we read in verse 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.**
  - God went through alone because He alone would bring in the promised kingdom of righteousness.
2. This is a great encouragement for Abram and for us too!
- a. The establishment of the kingdom does not depend upon us, but upon God!
    - That is what He is showing us here!
    - That is the call of faith...
      - We are called to look to Him and not to ourselves for salvation!
      - It is totally beyond us to bring in righteousness—we can't even save ourselves...
        - But our gracious LORD has taken on all the responsibility!
        - We cannot mess this covenant up because we are not taking on the obligation to perform it!
          - It is all of God and His promise.
  - b. Oh yes, you have to believe—of course you do...
    - You must repent of your sins and come to Christ with sincerity to receive this salvation—well of course you must...
      - How could you be saved if you don't trust the only one who can save you?
    - God is telling you all of this so that you will trust Him for it.
      - Faith is not indifference—it is clinging to God for what He does to save...
      - Neither is faith self-reliance—it is clinging to God for what He does to save...
      - Neither is faith despair as if there is no hope—it is clinging to God for what He has promised to do.
    - And it is even God who gives you this faith and keeps you in this faith!
      - But He does that by calling you into the faith and calling you to endure through patience and faith until you inherit the promises.
  - c. But you see, the work of establishing this kingdom of righteousness and blessing is a work that is sure because God has undertaken this work...
    - His covenant promise is absolutely certain...
      - so do not grow weary...
    - Have you grown weary?
      - Have you lost hope in what God can do?
      - Has waiting for His promises discouraged you from believing His promises?
      - Have you stopped really praying for fruit and for His kingdom to come?
        - Then renew your faith!

- God has promised—get back to following Him and trusting Him!

C. Now take a look at the promise itself...

1. It is summarised in verses 18-21...
  - **Gen 15:18-21: 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—<sup>19</sup> the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, <sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”**
  - The implication here is not that God also made this covenant, but that this is the covenant that He made at this time—this is the promise He made on that day...
2. This part of God’s promise would take about a thousand years to fulfill...
  - It took about 500 years for the initial conquest under Joshua, but then another 500 for the task to be complete in the time of David and Solomon.
  - It is quite a remarkable thing that this promise was given to Abram before he had even had a son...when he was perhaps 80 years old...
    - The promise that he would have so many descendants after 400 years of affliction in Egypt that they would fill the land of Canaan,
      - And that because of sin, the Canaanites would be cast out.
3. But of course this promise had implications that went far beyond the conquest of Canaan...
  - a. As I have already shown you, if that was all there was to it, what good was it to Abram and his immediate descendants?
    - The promise of his multiplied descendants in the land of Canaan was the beginning of the kingdom of righteousness that God had promised to Abram.
    - Taking Canaan was one of the stages in fulfilling that promise.
  - b. Abram knew that this kingdom would bring blessing to him after he was dead and gone from this world.
    - Otherwise, these promises would have been worth very little to him.
    - God had told him when He first called him that He would make him a great nation that would be blessed and would be a blessing.
      - The promise was of a kingdom of righteousness for sinners like you and like me...
      - A kingdom where sins would be forgiven at the door of entrance and where righteousness and peace would prevail.
        - God has accomplished many more steps in the fulfillment of that promise, but we are still waiting that kingdom to fully come!
      - Let us not grow weary as we wait...

- But let us draw strength from God's sure promises that we might through faith and patience inherit the promises.