

GENESIS 15:7-10, 17-18 HOW CAN I KNOW?

⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

⁸ But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"

⁹ So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—

The covenant that God makes with Abram is a blood covenant. Acknowledging that the life is in the blood, the partners in a blood covenant seal their vows to one another by taking the curse of death upon themselves if they should break the covenant. It is the most serious possible form of our childhood oath, "Cross by heart and hope to die." When equal parties are involved, they both walk between the slain animals, thereby taking the curse ("let it be done to me as it has been to these animals") upon themselves. In the case of a vow by an inferior to be faithful to a superior, only the inferior party takes the walk. Here, to seal the promise of the Promised Land, God lowers himself to take the covenant walk alone (the classical biblical symbols of God being fire and smoke). In effect, God is saying, "If this covenant is broken, regardless of who breaks it, I will take the curse upon myself."

The ultimate Promised Land is our eternal rest with God, that is, where he dwells. Through Abram, God has guaranteed the final delivery of his promise by taking the covenant curse upon himself. Otherwise, if Abram takes the walk, humankind would have to be destroyed since we are the covenant breakers. But as it is, the curse can only be satisfied by the death of a being who is at once human (representing the covenant breaker) and God (the one who took the curse upon himself). There is only one Person who meets the necessary criteria. Jesus is the only way to an eternal relationship with God (the Promised Land) because he is the only one who can satisfy the requirement of the curse. His cross fulfills the curse and his resurrection proves that to be true.

Open my eyes, O God, so that I can see your most gracious providence in this strange and wonderful event in the life of Abram. Help me grow in my faith that I might fully receive the blessing of your love and mercy and come to more fully understand your nature and will and purpose. Amen.