



ROOTS: back to the source.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 15:6; 21-22

Today we are going to answer the question...

Can I trust God?

We have been conditioned in our world to manage our Expectations vs. Reality. We all expect to be let down. We learn to manage our expectations fully aware that we will not get what we think we are going to get. So it's no wonder that people today are skeptical about Christianity and the promises of God.

We have been let down by so many things. We go into every contract or agreement thinking we are being taken somehow or on some level. Nothing is ever as good as it seems.

The question still stands... Can we trust God?

In the Bible contracts or agreements were called Covenants. A biblical covenant, sometimes called a testament, is basically an agreement between two parties.

Among the ancients was a kind of contract known as a suzerain treaty.

The rules were simple:

- 1) The greater of the two parties established the conditions.
- 2) These conditions specified the rewards if the contract was kept and the punishment if it was broken.
- 3) The covenant was typically ratified by a blood sacrifice showing how serious it was.

One of the first formal covenants established in the Bible is established between God and a man named Abram.

Genesis 15:1-3

¹After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

"Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,

your very great reward.”

²But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

God comes to a man named Abram and says, I am your reward. Abram pushes back because in this culture everything is family. Anything that God could have given Abram would have ended there because he had no children. He had no heir.

Abram basically says he has no honor in his culture because he has no children, anything I have will be given not to my family but to my servant. Where is the reward in that?

Genesis 15:4-5

⁴Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.”

⁵He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

God makes Abram a promise. You will have children. Not only that, but your offspring will be as many as the stars in the sky!

Look at Abram’s response... Our key verse for this week.

Genesis 15:6

⁶Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Abram believed God. And because of that he was called righteous.

How often are we deemed righteous because we have believed God’s promises? Do we make a habit of questioning God or believing God?

We have been conditioned to be skeptical. We look for the loophole. We expect to be let down. Our eyes are open to the fact that we will not be on the right side of most contracts.

But.... Abram believed the Lord and God credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:7-8

⁷He 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.”

⁸But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

God not only promises Abram a family, but also land. A land that he did not own. A considerable amount of land. Abram's response? How will I know? Can we put that in writing?

So God offers Abram a suzerain contract...

Genesis 15:9-11

⁹So 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."

¹⁰Abram 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. ¹¹Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

1) First God established the conditions.

Genesis 15:12-14

¹²As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

¹³Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

2) God specified the rewards if the contract was kept and the punishment if it was broken.

Genesis 15:15-16

¹⁵You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

3) God and Abram ratified the covenant by a blood sacrifice showing how serious it was.

Genesis 15:17-21

¹⁷When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

The two parties walked together between the bisected carcasses to pledge loyalty to the contract. This would be symbolic of what would happen to them if the contract was broken.

Today's question... **Can we trust God?**

Genesis 15:6

⁶Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Abram who later is renamed Abraham. Believed God. He had some moments of disbelief, but his faith in God was credited to him as righteousness.

Here's why this matters...

We have the opportunity to enter a covenant relationship with God.

The New Covenant:

1) The greater of the two parties established the conditions.

Luke 22:19-20

¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus ushered in a new contract. A new agreement. A new testament or covenant. At the last supper Jesus says, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Before Jesus went to the cross, he established a new order. And it would be his own blood that would be spilled to ratify the agreement.

2) These conditions specified the rewards if the contract was kept and the punishment if it was broken.

Hebrews 8:8b-12

"The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

⁹It will not be like the covenant

I made with their ancestors

when I took them by the hand

to lead them out of Egypt,

because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them,

declares the Lord.

¹⁰This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel

after that time, declares the Lord.

I will put my laws in their minds
and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

¹¹No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.

¹²For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."

The terms of the new covenant are stated as faith and forgiveness. God promises to forgive our sins, if we promise to trust him by faith.

The terms of the new covenant that Jesus establishes is forgiveness of sins for those who put their faith in Jesus.

- 3) The covenant was typically ratified by a blood sacrifice showing how serious it was.

Hebrews 9:14-15

¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

JESUS IS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT. When Jesus went to the cross and then returned from the grave he established a new covenant. One that was sealed by his own blood.

Can we trust God? The descendants of Abraham are the Jewish people. From one man who had no offspring, God built a nation. He and Abram agreed and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Now we have the same choice, will we believe God and accept the terms of the new covenant established in Jesus? Will we be called righteous?

Let's pray

Small Group Questions.

1. Have you ever entered into a contractual agreement? (Car, House, Loan) What were the terms of the agreement? Have you ever been shorted on a deal?
2. Has there ever been in a time in your life when you were let down? What was your reaction? Was there a remedy for the situation?
3. A suzerain treaty. A. The greater of the two parties established the conditions. B. These conditions specified the rewards if the contract was kept and the punishment if it was broken. C. The covenant was typically ratified by a blood sacrifice showing how serious it was. How does this contract differ from today's contracts? How is it similar?
4. Abram was credited as righteous because of his faith. How can we have the same faith today?
5. When Jesus came, He established a new covenant and was sealed with His blood. What are the promises we have today because of this new covenant?