



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### Talk Genesis 22:15-24: God's Confirmation of His Covenant with Abraham

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#### Lesson 49

*"Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba." 20" Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, "Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21 Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." 23 And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. 24 His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah."*

#### Background Notes

In Genesis 22 we have the supreme test of Abraham's faith. He was asked to give up -- to sacrifice -- his beloved son Isaac. Abraham passed the test, even though Isaac was not literally sacrificed. At the last minute God provided a ram for the sacrifice in place of Isaac. However, God looks on the heart. God saw the reality of Abraham's faith, even to the point of giving up his son Isaac to the Lord.

God looks on our hearts as well, and He tests our faith. We can pass the tests, or we can fail the tests of faith that God allows to come into our lives. After Abraham passed this supreme test of faith, and even before he and Isaac left the Mount Moriah area, God confirmed His covenant with Abraham. In verse 17, God said to Abraham, "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies."

In an interesting commentary on this passage, Dr. Henry M. Morris made some rough calculations for the number of stars and the number of grains of sand on the seashores around the world. Guess what? Both numbers come out about the same: ten to the twenty-fifth. That is a one followed by twenty-five zeros – a big number!

The main point here, of course, is that Abraham's descendents would be innumerable, and that certainly has come true. The end of verse 17 says, "your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies." The walled cities of ancient times had massive gates and gate structures, and the city's defenses were strongest at the gates. In

addition, all the major governmental decisions of the city were made at the gate. So to "possess the gate of your enemies" meant to completely conquer your enemies. This prophecy certainly came true when Israel conquered Canaan under Joshua.

In verse 18 we have the wonderful promise of the coming Messiah: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." That verse is certainly speaking of Christ. We can be sure of that, because Galatians 3:16 quotes this verse: "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ." That quote is taken right from Genesis 22:18. It is a Messianic prophecy.

In verses 20-24 we have the record of the descendants of Nahor, Abraham's brother. Now you might say, "Why did God, by the Holy Spirit, include this in the record?" These verses even seem to detract from the main lesson of the chapter, Abraham's test of faith! Well, the main reason for these verses being included is to give us the lineage of Rebekah. Rebekah became the wife of Isaac, and through Isaac and Rebekah the promised blessings would be carried to the next generation.

## **Doctrinal Points**

### **1. Blessing follows obedience.**

Why was Abraham promised such blessing? Verses 17-18: "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Why such blessing? There it is, at the end of verse 18: "because you have obeyed My voice."

When the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant were confirmed to Isaac in Genesis 26:5, the Lord gave the same reason for the covenant blessings: "because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

When the Mosaic Law was given, God said in Deuteronomy 11:26-28: "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known."

Obedience is the key to God's blessing. Blessing follows obedience. This is a divine principle! Do you want blessing in your life? Blessing follows obedience!

As an illustration of this principle, I'd like to read the results of a study of two families done by a sociologist in the state of New York some years ago. It is known as the "Jukes-Edwards Study." One family was the family of Max Jukes and the other was the family of Jonathan Edwards. As you know, Jonathan Edwards was a major force in the first Great Awakening here in America in the 1700s. Max Jukes was a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards, but he was an unbeliever, a man of no principles, and he married a woman of similar character. What happened to those families in subsequent generations?

Among the known descendents of Max Jukes, over 1200 descendants were studied. 310 were "career" vagrants, 440 were physically wrecked by lives of debauchery and

immorality, 130 were sent to prison for an average of 13 years each, 7 of them were murderers, 100 were alcoholics, 60 were habitual thieves, and 190 were public prostitutes. Of the 20 who learned a trade, 10 learned their trade in a state prison. None of them made a significant contribution to society. On the contrary, they collectively cost the state of New York \$1,200,000.00 -- and that is by the costs of many years ago.

What about the family of Jonathan Edwards? He came from a Christian family and he married a girl of like character. Among his descendants who were studied: 300 became clergymen, missionaries, or theological professors. Over 100 became college professors. Over 100 became lawyers, and 30 of them became judges. Over 60 became physicians. Over 60 became authors of good books. 14 were presidents of universities. Many of them became giants in American industry. Three were U.S. Congressmen, and one was a Vice President of the United States.

You see, even the world recognizes that the results of a faithful, obedient, Christian lifestyle are far better than the results of a life that denies or ignores biblical commands. How much more should we as Christians appreciate this truth? Blessing follows obedience!

## **2. Confirmation follows obedience.**

The covenant that God made with Abraham was established back in Genesis 12, at least 40 years before this time. Over the years, God had confirmed His covenant with Abraham several times. It was an unconditional covenant. This means that the fulfillment of the covenant was not dependent on Abraham's obedience. However, because Abraham obeyed, God once again confirmed the covenant. What a wonderful experience that must have been for Abraham, to have the Lord personally speak to him and confirm His promises! Do you see the principle here? Confirmation follows obedience.

The same is true for us. The Christian life is a step-by-step walk of faith. How can be sure of the steps? How do we know if we have made the right decisions? Answer: Be an obedient Christian! Obey in all areas of your life – in the "big" areas of obedience as well as the small details of God's commands. Confirmation of your decisions will follow obedience.

God confirms the steps of faith of the obedient Christian. You don't have to worry about making mistakes, or making the wrong decision when it comes to job changes, or moves, or family decisions -- as long as you are an obedient Christian. God loves to guide the steps and confirm the steps of the obedient Christian.

I don't know how many times the Lord confirmed our move to the Midwest area many years ago. I was studying in New England at that time, and we wanted to stay in the northeast. However, we believed that God was calling us to the ministry at Emmaus Bible College. We took the step of faith and moved to the Midwest, and the Lord has definitely confirmed that step many times. Confirmation follows obedience.

Are you wondering why you feel unsure and confused about your decisions in life? Do you wonder why God is not confirming your walk of faith at the present time? Do a self-check on your life. Am I an obedient Christian in the "big" commands as well as the "small" commands of Scripture? Remember, confirmation follows obedience.

## **Practical Application**

"It's not over until it's over."

Now that's not a verse in the Bible! It's a quote from Yogi Berra, former coach of the New York Yankees baseball team. He meant, of course, that the ball game was not over until "Out #3" in the ninth inning of the game. But we can apply that quotation to the Christian's life of faith. "It's not over until it's over" -- that is, in the life of faith. It will be over when we die or the Lord returns for His people, because there is no need for faith in heaven. The opportunity to live by faith is now -- not then. Then it's over! Until that time, we walk by faith -- and "it's not over until it's over."

In Genesis 22 Abraham passed a giant test of faith. However, just because he passed that test didn't mean that he no longer had to walk by faith. It didn't mean that there would be no more tests of his faith. In fact, there were many more tests in Abraham's faith. In Genesis 23 his faith would be tested at the time of the death and the burial of Sarah. Abraham lived about forty more years after Sarah died. Abraham had to keep walking by faith, with tests along the way. His life of faith was not over until it was over.

The same is true in our lives. It is not over just because we pass some major test of our faith. Sometimes, when we pass a major test of faith, we tend to sit back and relax and think, "Well, it's over." No! That's dangerous thing, because it's not over until it's over!

So hang in there and keep walking by faith. "It's not over until it's over!"