

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

²But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." ⁴But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." ⁵He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:1-6 NRSV

Accurately predicting the future is a very risky business. It seems to me that very few folks have really been able to do that. Back in the mid-sixties there was Jean Dixon, whose claim to fame as a predictor of future events came from her supposed "premonition" of President Kennedy's assassination. Afterward she gained in fame, wrote a book or two and made many predictions of the future. Most of them however, were very wrong. In 1972 when I worked for the Rochester, New York downtown department store, Sibley's, everyone was starting to speculate what was going to happen to the downtown core. One of the managers in the department where I worked said that downtown would flourish, and people would come back in great numbers to live and work. Well, some 41 years later there really is no more "downtown" Rochester, and Sibley's itself has been gone for over twenty years.

So I give Abram a lot of credit as perhaps the greatest example of faith. Here is a man who at age 65 after dutifully worshiping his ancestral gods, hearkens to the voice of Yahweh, leaves his homeland to a "place" that God will show him. There is no "ifs and buts" about the request, Abram just does it! God even promises to make him a "great nation" If one reads the scripture concerning this all Abram gets in the journey is other kings interested in his wife!

You don't read about Abram questioning, he just does it! So we come to the text above from Genesis 15. Again, God makes a fantastic promise that Abram's descendants will be as numerous as the visible stars in the sky! This only told him after he only learns that his own issue will be his heir. Both Abram and his wife Sarah are in their nineties by this point! If I were Abram at this point I would probably either broke down in laughter, or perhaps I should go back to worshiping the gods I did before. So the next statement in the scripture becomes truly extraordinary: *"And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness"*(Genesis 15:6 NRSV).

The Bible tells us that indeed Abram's faith was rewarded, not just in the miraculous birth of his son Isaac, but over time consider that three great world faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam ALL trace Abraham as a common ancestor.

Abram (to become Abraham) really had faith ! What about you? We are God's children; we have the work of the savior to continue to guide us. May we take the example of Abraham and ask ourselves the question from the old milk commercials, "GOT FATIH?"

Pr. John Van Haneghan