

When Fire Falls from Heaven

Class Schedule

Session One **Sunday, March 30, 6:30 - 8:00 pm**

Overview of the Study	2
Connecting Old Testament Characters with Christ	3
"Fire" as Used in the Scriptures	4
David Repents; Fire Falls Verifying God's Pardon	5-6

Session Two **Sunday, April 6, 6:30 - 8:00 pm**

Moses Obeys; Fire Falls Verifying God's Promise	8-10
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Session Three **Sunday, April 13, 6:30 - 8:00 pm**

Solomon Yearns; Fire Falls Verifying God's Presence	12-14
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Session Four **Sunday, April 20, 4:00 - 5:30 pm**

Elijah Prays; Fire Falls Verifying God's Power	16-18
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Session Five **Sunday, April 27, 6:30 - 8:00 pm**

Abraham Believes; Fire Falls Verifying God's Provision	20-24
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Overview of the Study

- I. Like DAVID, when we bring a sacrificial offering
with INDIVIDUAL REPENTANCE (I Chron. 21:26),
fire falls from heaven verifying God's PARDON.
- II. Like MOSES, when we bring a sacrificial offering
with IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE (Lev. 9:24),
fire falls from heaven verifying God's PROMISE.
- III. Like SOLOMON, when we bring a sacrificial offering
with INTENSE YEARNING (II Chron. 7:1),
fire falls from heaven verifying God's PRESENCE.
- IV. Like ELIJAH, when we bring a sacrificial offering
with INTERCESSORY PRAYER (I Kgs. 18:38),
fire falls from heaven verifying God's POWER.
- V. Like ABRAHAM, when we bring a sacrificial offering
with INCREASING FAITH (Gen. 15:17),
fire falls from heaven verifying God's PROVISION.

These five lessons match the five steps of being filled with the Spirit:

1. Repent, Acts 2:38

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

2. Obey, Acts 5:32

"We are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

3. Thirst, Jn. 7:37-39

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

4. Ask, Lk. 11:13

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him."

5. Faith, Gal. 3:2, 5, 13-14

"Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? . . . He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? . . . Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Connecting Old Testament Characters with Christ

1. David:

If Christ was the Son of David, why did David call Him Lord?
Matt. 1:1; 21:9, 15; 22:42-45

2. Moses:

Moses was the Law-giver; Jesus was the Law-fulfiller.
Matt. 5:17; Heb. 3:2, 5; Heb. 11:23f; Matt. 17:3; Lk. 24:27;
Jn. 1:17; Rev. 11:3-6

3. Solomon:

Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived (II Chron. 9:22-23), but a greater than Solomon came (Christ).
Mt. 6:29; Matt. 12:42; Matt. 13:54
Lk. 2:40-52; Jn. 7:46

4. Elijah:

Elijah ascended into heaven without dying; he later appeared at the Transfiguration, and in the future he will appear in the Tribulation.
Matt. 11:14; Matt. 17:3-4; Rev. 11:3-6;
Christ ascended and will return, Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:11
Miracles: Elijah - 6; Christ - 100+.
See Jas. 5:17-18 (John the Baptist, Mal. 3:1; Mal. 4:5)

5. Abraham:

Abraham, who lived more than 2,000 years before Jesus' birth, rejoiced to see Christ's day.
Jn. 8:58; Heb. 11:8-10; Gal. 3:6-7, 13-14, 29

Notes:

Fire fell from heaven on DAVID's sacrifice and on SOLOMON's sacrifice at the same location where ABRAHAM went to sacrifice his son, Isaac . . . and where JESUS CHRIST was crucified (Mount Moriah).

MOSES and ELIJAH both "saw" God in a cave on Mount Horeb (Sinai) . . . at the place where Moses had his "burning bush" experience . . . These two Old Testament men appeared together with Jesus Christ at His transfiguration, Matt. 17:3, and they also will appear together during the tribulation, Rev. 11:3-6.

"Fire" as Used in the Scriptures

I. Definition: Fire

1. heat and light caused by combustion
2. spiritual or mental energy
3. impassioned eloquence
4. enthusiasm

II. God's presence in fire

1. "Our God is a consuming fire," Deut. 4:24
2. Burning bush, Ex. 3:2
3. Pillar of fire, Ex. 13:22; 14:24
4. Punishment, Lev. 10:2

III. New Testament fire

1. Lk. 9:54 - James and John wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan city
2. Mk. 9:49 - Jesus: "Everyone will be seasoned with fire."
3. Lk. 12:49 - Jesus: "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled."
4. Mt. 3:11 - "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

IV. God's fire upon believers brings PURITY and ZEAL (Acts 2:3)

1. "He is like a refiner's fire . . . He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness," Mal. 3:2-3.
2. "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire," I Cor. 3:11-15.
3. "His word was in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not," Jer. 20:9. (See Jer. 23:29.)
4. "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue," Psa. 39:3.

David Repents; God's Fire Falls

I Chron. 21:26

I. Concentration: on the events of I Chron. 21 (see also II Sam. 24)

1. King David ordered his army commander, Joab, to take a census of Israel's men of military age; Joab protested, but then he counted them, reporting 1,100,000 men in Israel and 470,000 in Judah (not including the tribes of Levi and Benjamin), vv. 1-6.
2. David realized his sin, repented, confessed, and asked God for forgiveness; the prophet, Gad, gave him his choice of divine punishment: famine and starvation for three years, military oppression by an enemy for three months, or deadly plague for three days, vv. 7-12.
3. David chose the 3-day plague, during which 70,000 men died; David prayer for mercy upon the people, asking that only he and his family be punished by the Lord. vv. 13-17.
4. Upon God's orders, David purchased the threshing floor owned by Araunah on Mount Moriah; David built an altar there and offered sacrifices; fire fell from heaven; the plague was lifted, vv. 18-30.

II. Observations: on the spiritual implications seen here

1. Satan prompted it (v. 1); the Lord God permitted it; but David perpetrated the sin, and he bore the full responsibility for it.

According to the Bible, God allowed Satan (the Adversary) to trouble Job (Job 1:12; 2:6), King Saul (I Sam. 16:14), David (I Chron. 21:1), Joshua, the high priest (Zech. 3:1) and the Apostle Paul (II Cor. 12:7).

2. Joab (with unusual spiritual perception) only partially obeyed David's orders, omitting the priestly tribe of Levi and his own tribe of Benjamin, v. 6.
3. Although we are not told why the numbering (census) was evil (I Chron. 21:7), probably it was an indication that David was trusting more in his military strength than in God's power (Psa. 20:7; 33:16-17).
4. Or, David's sin was a violation of God's instructions to Moses on how to conduct a census . . . which included a "redemption" offering (Ex. 30:11-16).

The first would have been a sin of motive, and the second would have been a sin of method. (Doubt and disobedience!) See "redeemed" in I Pet. 1:18-19.

III. Meditation: on Mount Moriah, a sacred place in biblical history

1. In this text (I Chron. 21:18-26; 27:23-24), Mount Moriah was the place which David purchased from Ornan (Araunah the Jebusite) to erect an altar and sacrifice to God . . . the place where fire fell from heaven signifying cleansing and forgiveness.
2. Mount Moriah (several centuries earlier) was the site of Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son, Isaac, Gen. 22:2.
3. Mount Moriah was the site where King Solomon built the temple, where at the dedication heavenly fire again fell, II Chron. 3:1.
4. Mount Moriah was the place (or very near the site) where Jesus was crucified (Calvary; Golgotha) . . . just north of Jerusalem, Matt. 27:33; Mk. 15:22; Jn. 19:17.

IV. Revelation: on David's reactions and responses after he had sinned against God

1. His conscience (heart) condemned him; he repented and confessed his sin; he asked God for forgiveness, I Chron. 21:8; II Sam. 24:10.
2. He listened to the words of the Lord's prophet, acknowledging the full responsibility for his sin, and accepting as right and just the severe consequences of his actions, I Chron. 21:13, 17; II Sam. 24:11-13.
3. He "saw" the angel of the Lord, and begged God for mercy, I Chron. 21:16; II Sam. 24:17.
4. He worshiped the Lord, realizing that true worship demands a price: "I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing," II Sam. 24:24; I Chron. 21:24.

V. Applications: as a Christian, I need to receive God's pardon . . .

1. Pray: "Lord, help me not to disobey Your commands . . . and whenever I disobey, help me to repent and confess immediately."
2. Pray: "Lord, please do not let others suffer because of my sins against You. Help me to see You, to receive your mercy and grace, and to offer myself as a living sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1-2)
3. Reflect daily on the implications and blessings of the atonement, accomplished by Jesus on the cross at Mount Moriah; in the light of Christ's supreme sacrifice, worship the Lord my God in spirit and truth, thereby receiving His mercy and grace.
4. In worship, see and experience God's miraculous power being manifested in my life and in my church . . . God's fire falling from heaven; put God in first place, making His will my top priority above all else.

Notes

Moses Obeys; God's Fire Falls

Lev. 9:22-24

I. Concentration: on the events in Leviticus before God's fire fell from heaven

1. Under God's direction, Moses established the regulations for Israel's sacrificial system of worship, Lev. 1-7.
2. Moses ordained his older brother, Aaron, as the high priest, and Aaron's sons as assistants to their father, Lev. 8.
3. Moses gave a conditional promise from God: "This is the thing which the Lord has commanded you to do, and the glory of the Lord will appear to you," Lev. 9:6.
4. Aaron, in obedience to God's word through Moses, offered sacrifices for himself, his sons, and for the people, Lev. 9:7-21.

II. Observations: on the various sacrificial offerings which were commanded

1. **Burnt Offering (Lev. 1)** - The worshipper was to bring as a freewill offering a male animal of the herd or flock, without blemish. The individual was to place his hand on the animal's head, symbolically transferring his life to the animal to be offered as a sacrifice to bring atonement between man and God. The priest was to kill the animal and sprinkle its blood on the altar and near the door of the tabernacle. The animal's body was to be completely consumed by the fire on the altar.
2. **Grain Offering (Lev. 2)** - The grain from the harvest, finely ground into flour, was to be baked into bread. Olive oil, frankincense, and salt also were added to the mixture.
3. **Peace Offering (Lev. 3)** - This was an optional sacrifice, often in conjunction with a confession or vow or simply as a freewill offering of gratitude. The ritual was similar to that of the burnt offering, except that the blood and fat of the animal were given to God. The meat was preserved for food.
4. **Sin Offering (Lev. 4)** - This sacrifice signified the cancellation of guilt for unintended sins or sins of ignorance. The sacrificed animals varied depending upon whether the individual was a priest, a ruler (king), or a common person. The carcasses of the sacrificed animals were dumped outside the camp.
5. **Trespass Offering (Lev. 5)** - This ritual for this offering was very similar to the sin offering, but the trespass offering was concerned primarily with restitution. The guilty person was required to repay what he had taken illegally, plus pay a fine equal to 20 percent of its value, plus a ram for a spiritual sacrifice.

III. Meditation: on the spiritual implications seen in these sacrifices

1. The Burnt Offering symbolized Christ, the spotless Lamb of God offered for us, Jn. 1:29; I Pet. 1:19. Christ took our sins upon himself at the cross, II Cor. 5:21. His blood brings spiritual life, forgiveness, and atonement for our sins, Lev. 17:11; I Pet. 1:19. Christ completely and totally poured out His soul unto death, Isa. 53:12.
2. The Grain Offering teaches that God is the Creator and Provider of every good thing to sustain life. It also teaches that mankind should return a portion of God's blessings to Him as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving. The bread represents Christ, the bread of life, Jn. 6:35.
3. The Peace Offering teaches us to present ourselves to the Lord as a holy sacrifice, Rom. 12:1-2. We are to identify our lives with Christ's life, Gal. 2:20. We are to receive daily forgiveness and cleansing through repentance and faith, I Jn. 1:9. We are to give the best that we have in worship unto the Lord, Who is the source of all the good things that we enjoy, Jas. 1:17.
4. The Sin Offering reminds us that God makes provision for the forgiveness of all our sins, even the unintentional and unrecognized ones. The different animals sacrificed teaches us to recognize that, as spiritual leaders, we are subject to a stricter judgment than others due to the larger scope of our influence, Jas. 3:1.
5. The Trespass Offering teaches us to recognize the extent of our sins in God's eyes . . . including our unclean thoughts, words, deeds, and even our sins of omission: knowing to do good but not doing it, Jas. 4:17. It also reminds us to make restitution whenever possible, to accept the just penalty imposed by the state for our crimes, and to serve the "probation" time required by the church before our restoration to full spiritual fellowship.

IV. Revelation: on the obedience of Moses which brought down God's fire

This event occurred on Mount Horeb (Sinai), the place where God revealed Himself to Moses (Ex. 33) and to Elijah (I Kgs. 19)

1. Moses did the right thing: he carefully obeyed God's orders to the letter.
2. Moses did the right thing, in the right way: he did not deviate from the specific details given for each sacrificial offering.
3. Moses did the right thing, in the right way, at the right time: he followed the schedule established by the Lord, including the observance of special holy days for worship and celebration.
4. Moses did the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, for the right reason: his primary motive for obeying God was based on love and reverence for the Lord . . . not so much on his fear and dread of punishment if he disobeyed.

V. Applications: as a Christian, I need to claim God's promise . . .

1. Fire will fall on me when I follow Christ's example of pouring out my life in total surrender to His will, Phil. 2:17; II Tim. 4:6.

2. Fire will fall on me when I exhibit in my life the qualities of oil, frankincense, and salt . . . being like a sacrifice of poured-out, healing oil; like the sweet-smelling aroma of intercessory prayer; and like life-preserving salt in a decaying world.

3. Fire will fall on me when I present myself (all that I am, all that I have, and all that I can be) as a living sacrifice to God, which is my holy, acceptable, perfect, and reasonable service of spiritual worship unto Him, Rom. 12:1-2.

4. Fire will fall on me when I identify my life with Christ's life: *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me," Gal. 2:20.*

Notes

Solomon Yearns; God's Fire Falls

II Chron. 7:1

I. Introduction: the events surrounding the construction of the temple

1. David chose the site: the threshing floor of Ornan, where God had answered him by fire from heaven, II Chron. 3:1.
2. David drew the plans for the temple, according to God's instructions; the building was to be exactly twice as large as Moses' tabernacle, with the same shape and proportions, I Chron. 28:10-12.
3. David gave generously to the building project, and he encouraged others to contribute to the effort, I Chron. 29:3-9.
4. David enlisted the builders, gathered the materials, and challenged his son, Solomon, to complete the work . . . which he did in seven years, I Kgs. 6:38.

II. Meditation: "Allowing God's Spirit to Fill His Temple" (II Chron. 5)

1. The Jews brought the dedicated things to God (v. 1), on a specified day of worship (v. 3), and made great sacrificial offerings unto Him (v. 6).
2. They put the ark (representing God's presence and His word) in the proper place (v. 7), sanctified themselves (v. 11), and clothed themselves in white linen (v. 12).
3. They were unified in heart and mind . . . with one purpose: to worship the Lord God (v. 13).
4. They praised the Lord for Who He is, and thanked Him for what He does . . . and God's glory filled the house (vv. 13-14).
God inhabits the praises of His people . . . Psa. 22:3.

III. Revelation: on the spiritual implications seen in this chapter

*Do we want the glory of God to fill His temple (our body, I Cor. 6:19-20)?
If so, here is what we need to do:*

1. Today, present ourselves in dedication unto Him, II Cor. 8:5.
2. Put God in His proper place (first priority); allow the Holy Spirit to anoint, sanctify, and clothe us with the white garments of Christ's righteousness, Phil. 3:9; II Cor. 5:21.
3. Be of one mind, heart, and will . . . in unity with Christ and with other believers, Eph. 4:3, 13.
4. Worship the Lord with sincere praise and thanksgiving: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever!" v. 13.

IV. Meditation: "Solomon's Temple Dedication Prayer" (Key verses in II Chron. 6)

- 1. Verse 18 - God is transcendent . . . supreme above all human limitations, surpassing all earthy excellence, beyond all worldly knowledge.**
- 2. Verse 21 - When God's people speak "supplications" . . . prayers offered to the Lord humbly and submissively, earnestly and beseechingly; sincerely begging for forgiveness . . . He hears and forgives.**
- 3. Verses 29-31 - God knows every person's heart (their burdens and griefs), and He meets those needs in order to guide them toward fulfilling His divine destiny for their lives.**
- 4. Verse 41 - When God is honored and glorified by man's praise and worship, He comes in power to bring His blessings of salvation and goodness which produce joy.**

V. Revelation: on the spiritual implications of these truths

- 1. Since God is transcendent, He is worthy of our worship.**
- 2. We must come to Him in repentance, humbly asking for forgiveness.**
- 3. God knows all about our problems, and He supplies our needs in order to accomplish His divine purposes.**
- 4. As we praise the Lord, He pours out His abundant blessings upon us.**

VI. Meditation: "If My People . . . Called By My Name" (II Chron. 7)

- 1. When Solomon finished praying, fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifices; the glory of the Lord filled the temple, and the people bowed down and worshipped the Lord, vv. 1-3.**
- 2. Solomon and the people celebrated and rejoiced for two weeks, offering thousands of animal sacrifices, vv. 4-11.**
- 3. The Lord God appeared a second time to Solomon, giving him a marvelous promise of forgiveness and healing for the nation, vv. 12-16.**
- 4. The Lord warned Solomon of the divine punishment that would come upon his dynasty and the nation if he disobeyed the commandments of God, vv. 17-22.**

VII. Revelation: on God's promise to hear, forgive, heal, and bless (II Chron. 7:14)

1. The promise is in the context of God's sending punishment (judgment) upon His people: drought, famine, locusts, and disease, v. 13. *God is in control of everything; He disciplines His chosen people with "tough love"; individually and nationally, sin always brings divine punishment, Heb. 12:5-11.*

2. The promise is addressed exclusively to God's chosen people: "My people who are called by My name," v. 14. *God does not call for unbelievers to pray for His hand of discipline to be lifted from a nation; rather, He calls for His own people to respond . . . those who are called by His Son's name ("Christian"), I Pet. 4:17.*

3. The promise is conditional; God's people were required to do four things: (1) humble themselves, (2) pray, (3) seek God's face, and (4) repent . . . turn from their wicked ways, v. 14. *Only a genuine humble prayer of repentance, coupled with a sincere seeking of God's face (in order to experience His presence and to renew one's commitment of obedience and faithfulness) will produce the desired results; we need to pray as David did in Psalm 51.*

4. The promised blessings are 4-fold: (1) God will hear, (2) God will forgive, (3) God will heal their land, and (4) God will continually watch over His people in love, vv. 14-16. *Such a prayer, offered out of a heart of integrity, will bring these divine responses: forgiveness, healing, renewal, and communion, Psalm 32.*

VIII. Application: as a Christian, I need to experience God's presence . . .

1. I shall experience God's presence in my life if/when I yearn for it with all my heart, Jer. 29:13.

2. I shall experience God's presence in my life if/when I desire Him as much as a starving person craves food or as a thirsty wanderer in the desert craves a drink of water, Psa. 42:1-2.

3. I shall experience God's presence in my life if/when I long to see His face as much as a blind person wants to have sight, Job 19:25-27.

4. I shall experience God's presence in my life when I sincerely call upon Him with faith, believing that He is near, Isa. 55:6-7.

When You said, "Seek My face,"

My heart said to You,

"Your face, Lord, I will seek." Psa. 27:8

Notes

Elijah Prays; God's Fire Falls

I Kgs. 18:38

I. Concentration: on Elijah's prayer which exhibited God's power (I Kgs. 18)

1. After three years of drought (see I Kgs. 17:1), God told Elijah to present himself to King Ahab and He would send rain; meanwhile Ahab and his servant, Obadiah, were searching for grass for their livestock, vv. 1-6.
2. Obadiah (a faithful servant of God who saved 150 prophets from Jezebel) met Elijah; at Elijah's word, Obadiah brought Ahab to him; Elijah told Ahab to gather the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, vv. 7-19.
3. Elijah proposed a contest to reveal which was the true God who could send down fire from heaven; the 450 prophets of Baal prayed all day with no results; then Elijah prayed and the fire fell to consume his sacrifice; the people exclaimed, "The Lord, He is God!" and at Elijah's command, all the prophets of Baal were executed, vv. 20-40.
4. Elijah told Ahab that a big rain was coming; as Elijah prayed seven times, his servant finally saw a cloud the size of a man's hand which grew into a dark thundercloud pouring down torrential rain; Ahab drove his chariot and Elijah ran to the town of Jezreel for shelter, vv. 41-46.

II. Meditation and Revelation: on these dramatic events

1. Ahab and Obadiah looked everywhere for grass and water. *When spiritual drought and famine come, God's people should search for the reason; often the basic cause is sin.*
2. In the midst of the wicked royal court of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, one man (Obadiah) feared the Lord greatly and risked his life to save other believers. *In every situation, God has preserved a remnant of faithful people who serve Him.*
3. False gods and pagan religions are absolutely impotent. *Only the true and living God can hear our prayers and exhibit His miraculous power.*
4. Elijah prayed seven times before his servant saw even a tiny cloud on the horizon, but when it appeared, Elijah proclaimed in faith that the drought was broken. *Persistent prayer and genuine faith produce miraculous results from the Lord.*

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit." - Jas. 5:16-18

III. Applications: as a praying Christian, I need to expect God's power . . .

1. By realizing that spiritual drought and famine often are caused by my own sins against God; then repenting and confessing my sins unto the Lord, asking for His merciful refreshing and restoration.
2. By remaining faithful to the Lord, serving him and others in His holy name regardless of adversity and persecution.
3. By trusting in the Lord to triumph gloriously through His almighty power.
4. By praying fervently with persistence and faith until the Lord answers.

IV. Concentration: on the "still small voice" of God (I Kgs. 19)

1. When Jezebel heard that Elijah had executed the prophets of Baal, she swore that she would kill him, vv. 1-2.
2. Elijah fled for his life into the wilderness south of Judah; discouraged and weary, he prayed that he would die; an angel appeared twice to feed him; later he traveled for 40 days and nights to a cave on Mount Horeb (Sinai) where the Lord appeared to him, vv. 3-10.
3. There (in the same place location where Moses saw the burning bush and later "saw" God, Ex. 33), the Lord revealed His power in a tornado, in an earthquake, and in a fire before speaking to Elijah in a "still small voice" to give him three tasks to perform, vv. 11-18.
4. Elijah accomplished the first task: he anointed Elisha to be his successor as a prophet in Israel, vv. 19-21. *(Elijah's two other divine assignments were accomplished by Elisha and by one of Elisha's students.)*

V. Meditation: on God's "heavenly provision for a hungry preacher"

1. First, ravens brought food to Elijah, I Kgs. 17:2-7.
2. Next, the widow of Zarephath fed Elijah, and he later raised her dead son to life, I Kgs. 17:8-24.
3. Then, angels of God fed Elijah, I Kgs. 19:4-8.
4. Lessons seen here:
 - (1) God always provides for our needs.
 - (2) God works in different ways to accomplish His purpose.
 - (3) Each method used reveals God's miraculous power.
 - (4) Each miracle is associated with a revelation about God:
 - He is the Almighty Creator who controls the animals of nature;
 - He is the Living God who brings resurrection;
 - He is the "Revealed Word" who speaks to mortal men.

VI. Revelation: on the words spoken by God to His servants (I Kgs. 19)

"Battle fatigue" often is accompanied by depression. The period immediately following a great spiritual victory quite frequently is followed by a time of great spiritual vulnerability. In such cases, Father God speaks to His people just as He spoke to Elijah.

1. A word of affection, vv. 9, 13 - God tenderly and gently speaks our name with compassionate concern.
2. A word of reflection, vv. 11-12 - God leads us to stand up and observe His mighty power revealed.
3. A word of direction, vv. 15-17 - God gives us a purpose in life, a destiny to fulfill, a task that will outlive us.
4. A word of correction, v. 18 - God, with merciful understanding, shows us our errors and misconceptions.

VII. Applications: as a listening Christian, I need to hear God's voice saying . . .

1. "I love you, and I am taking care of you."
2. "I am omnipotent . . . well able to supply all your needs."
3. "I have a vision of destiny, a divine purpose for your life."
4. "I will discipline you to make you a better person, a more effective servant in My kingdom."

Jesus said: "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." - Mark 11:22-24

Notes

Abraham Believes; God's Fire Falls

Gen. 15:17

I. ABRAHAM'S FAITH, STEP ONE (Gen. 12)

Concentration: on God's Call to Abram

1. God commanded Abram: get out of your country, from your family, from your father's house, to a land that I will show you, v. 1.
2. God promised Abram: I will make you a great nation, I will bless you (and bless those who bless you), I will make your name great, and I will make you a blessing to all families on the earth, vv. 2-3.

Meditation: on Abram's responses to God's call

1. At age 75, Abram departed, taking his wife, Sarai, and his brother's son, Lot, along with their possessions, vv. 4-5.
2. Abram traveled into the Promised Land (Canaan) to Shechem, where the Lord appeared and reaffirmed His original promises, vv. 6-7.
3. Abram built an altar there to the Lord, v. 7.
4. Abram moved his tent to a site between Bethel and Ai, where he built another altar and called on the name of the Lord before going south . . . outside of the land which God had promised him, vv. 8-9.

Revelation: on the relationship between God and Abram's family

1. Abram could have known Noah's son (Shem) . . . according to the Gen. 11 genealogy. *(Some scholars identify Shem with Melchizedek in Gen. 14:18.)*
2. Noah's father (Lamech) knew Adam, Gen. 11.
3. Both these genealogical lists (Adam to Noah, and Shem to Abraham) include ten generations, but Adam lived 930 years, while Abraham lived a relatively short life span of 175 years, Gen. 25:7.
4. In these early chapters of the Bible, God spoke with Adam and Noah and Abraham (not including Enoch, who was translated without dying); God's intimate communication with men did not overlap . . . a generation passed after Adam and before Noah, and after Noah and before Abraham.

Applications: as a Christian, I need to know that . . .

1. Whenever I obey God's commands, His conditional promises become unconditional promises. *God told Abram to go . . . "and I will bless," Abram obeyed by faith and God affirmed His promise by saying, "I will!" vv. 2, 7.*

2. Just as Noah heard the Garden of Eden story from his father (Lamech) who got it directly from Adam; and just as Abraham heard the story of the flood from Noah's son (Shem) who was on the ark . . . even so, I stand in a long line of spiritual family members who receive God's words and acts, and pass them along from generation to generation.

3. God's plan is to reveal Himself to individuals who are available to hear His voice, and His purpose is to use their influence for good all the days of their lives and into future generations.

4. In my personal life's journey, I "camp" between Bethel ("House of God") and Ai ("Ruin") . . . and my personal choice determines my destiny.

II. ABRAHAM'S FAITH, STEP TWO (Gen. 15)

Concentration: on the Lord's personal relationship with Abram

1. The Lord appeared in a vision to Abram, assuring him that He was his vision, comfort, protection, and reward, v. 1.

2. Abram asked God to clarify His promise about a son, vv. 2-3. *Would his promised son come through his servant, Eliezer?*

3. The Lord told Abram that his son would come directly from him, and that his descendants would be as innumerable as the stars, vv. 4-5.

4. Abram "believed in the Lord, as He accounted it to him for righteousness," v. 6; Rom. 4:3, 9-22.

Meditation: on cutting the covenant (the word "covenant" means "cutting")

1. God began by repeating His inheritance promises, but Abram asked, "How can I know for sure?" vv. 7-8.

2. The Lord established a blood covenant with Abram, which included:

(1) Animals sacrificed, by being cut in half, vv. 9-10.

(2) Placing the pieces of the dead animals a distance apart, v. 10.

(3) Swearing a blood-oath between the two parties, vv. 13-16.

(4) Walking between the sacrificed animals as a sign of the surety of the promises made . . . under penalty of death, v. 17.

3. God did all the work of establishing this covenant; all Abram did was to sacrifice the animals as God commanded him.

4. God answered by fire from heaven! "A smoking oven and a burning torch," v. 17, was God manifesting Himself as fire, walking into the covenant relationship with Abram. *The oven and torch was a figure of speech referring to One God (two nouns, with one magnifying the other, similar to "an officer and a gentleman," which refers to only one man, not to two men.)*

Revelation: on the great spiritual truths of this chapter

1. Humans cannot even begin to count God's blessings . . . they are numberless, like the sand, dust, and stars.
2. Salvation is by faith, and faith alone, v. 6; Eph. 2:8-9.
3. The "vultures of Satan" (v. 11) always gather where God and man are doing spiritual business (cutting a covenant); these demonic distractions must be driven away.
4. The manifestations of God's presence (fire) are terrifying to human beings, which, perhaps, account for the Lord's appearing to many individuals in dreams or visions, as He did when a deep sleep fell on Abram, v. 12.

Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Trust in God for His salvation of me.
2. Trust in God for His blood-covenant relationship with me.
3. Trust in God for His fulfilled promises to me.
4. Trust in God for His vision of destiny for me.

III. ABRAHAM'S FAITH, STEP THREE (Gen. 17)

Concentration: on the drastic changes initiated by God

1. God changed Abram (Father is exalted) to Abraham (Father of a multitude), v. 5. Sarai was changed to Sarah (Princess), v. 15.
2. God reestablished His everlasting covenant with Abraham, vv. 2, 6-9.
3. The Lord put into place the covenant sign: circumcision, vv. 10-14; 23-27.
4. The Lord named the coming son of promise Isaac (Laughter), vv. 17-21.

Meditation: on the spiritual significance of these events

1. Both Abram and Sarai underwent a spiritual change by the power of God . . . characterized by an "h" being added to their original names: (Abraham and Sarah). *The "h" sound in Hebrew represents the wind or breath of God, so perhaps these name changes signified the entry of the Holy Spirit into them?*
2. God's continual repetition and expansion of His covenant promises to Abraham (Gen. 12, 13, 15, and 17) signified the Lord's determination to encourage Abraham's faith and hope that His promises surely would be fulfilled.
3. Circumcision became the sign of God's covenant with Abraham's descendants; Abraham and his family all were circumcised on the same day, vv. 24-27.

4. Isaac, Abraham's second son, was chosen to receive God's covenant blessings, rather than his first son, Ishmael. (See Gal. 4:22-31.)

Revelation: on the lessons of circumcision

1. It involves shedding of blood - a ceremony of initiation into the Hebrew nation, sealed with blood . . . the life of the flesh, Lev. 17:11.
2. It involves cutting away flesh - signifying the removal of a physical part to allow the magnification of the spiritual part of man.
3. It involves pain and suffering - the rite always includes a sacrifice through which a person can move into a healing, joyful relationship with God.
4. It involves the reproductive organ - the act of surgically removing the foreskin of the male genital organ is connected to the process of human procreation. *Note this spiritual picture: Abraham was circumcised (entered God's community of faith) before he fathered Isaac, vv. 21, 26. Spiritual relationship precedes productivity!*

Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Allow God's indwelling Spirit to totally transform my life, II Cor. 5:17.
2. Conform to God's sovereign plan, not insisting on my own will and way.
3. Base my faith and hope on the sure foundation of God's word.
4. Identify the Old Testament covenant sign (circumcision) with the New Testament covenant sign (baptism) . . . being spiritually "circumcised" in ears, eyes, lips, and heart, Deut. 10:16; Ex. 6:12; Jer. 4:4; 6:10; Rom. 2:27-28; I Pet. 3:21.

IV. ABRAHAM'S FAITH, STEP FOUR (Gen. 22)

Concentration: on God's examination of Abraham's faith

1. It was a test of his spiritual discernment . . . Did he really hear what he thought he heard from the Lord? vv. 1-2. (*Sacrifice your only son, Isaac.*)
2. It was a test of his obedience . . . Abraham obediently rose early next morning to make preparations for the trip, vv. 3, 18.
3. It was a test of his spiritual perception . . . He "lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off," v. 4 . . . God's place of sacrifice on Mt. Moriah was the future site of the temple in Jerusalem, purchased by David and built by Solomon, I Chron. 21:21-26; II Chron. 3:1; 7:1-3.

4. It was a test of his faith . . . He believed God's word so completely that even though he actually might sacrifice his son, both of them would return to the camp, v. 5; Abraham believed that the Lord's resurrection power could bring Isaac back to life, Heb. 11:17-19.

Meditation: on the events occurring on Mount Moriah

1. Isaac was called Abraham's "only son" in spite of Abraham's first-born son, Ishmael, v. 2. (*Isaac was Abraham's only true covenant son.*)
2. Isaac asked his father to explain the details of the up-coming sacrifice, v. 7.
3. Abraham laid his submissive son, Isaac, on the wood, securing him there, and began the act of execution, vv. 9-10.
4. The Angel of the Lord (Pre-incarnate Christ) stopped Abraham from killing Isaac and substituted a ram; Abraham called the place "Jehovah-Jireh" . . . "The Lord Will Provide," vv. 11-14.

Revelation: on the Messianic pictures seen here

1. Jesus Christ is God's only begotten son, Jn. 1:14; 3:16.
2. Jesus was totally submissive to the Father's will; yet from the cross he asked the Father, "Why?" Matt. 27:46.
3. Jesus was nailed (bound) to a wooden cross on the same Mount Moriah where Abraham had offered Isaac. *The New Testament's cross is the Old Testament's altar, Heb. 13:10.*
4. God substituted the "Lamb of God" to die in our place . . . Jesus Christ became the sacrifice to pay for our sins, Jn. 1:29. *Jehovah-Jireh!*

Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Hear, see, believe, and obey God's personal words to me.
2. Willingly offer as a sacrifice to the Lord all that I am, all that I have, and all that I can be . . . my dreams, my ambitions, my aspirations, my future . . . all must die, Jn. 12:24.
3. Receive by faith, with thanksgiving, God's continuing salvation provided by the crucifixion of the son of God, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. 13:8.
4. Celebrate God's abundant blessings upon me and my family; rejoice that He is using my sacrifices to bless other persons on the earth, vv. 15-19.

The Scripture asserts four times: "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3 Gal. 3:6; Jas.

2:23. God's fire fell on his faith!

Notes