

Series: God & Abraham #1150

Title: Genesis 12.7

God Appears to Abram

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. It is Friday and time for us to bring together what we have learned this week into one final discourse before we break for the weekend. In the last few days we have seen in Genesis 12 these twin realities: when God makes a promise to us, we must never assume that means the promise will be immediately fulfilled. That's first. And second we must never assume there will not be danger for us while God is fulfilling His promise.

God's promises to Abraham, in covenant, the fulfilment of those promises took time. The same is true with us. God has His time. We have our time. But it is only in God's time when all the promises made to us come to fruition. And God does not remove all danger from our lives while we wait. The Christian life, what is the "Christian life"? Biblically and in twenty-first century practice our lives are hard, difficult, and replete with challenges. The Christian life is not an easy, problem-free existence. I know you know that. But it bears reminding because popular Christianity most often wants to tell a different story. It wants to sell us on so-called promises that God never made us.

Be discerning! Find in the Bible what God does and does not promise, and look with me to Abram as an example of how we wait on God, and face what threatens us. Today we are going to see something truly magnificent and very encouraging. *God appears to Abram! God appears to Abram!* The Lord *never* leaves us to ourselves and our own devices. He is with us! He gives unto us His presence and His voice to safely carry us through whatever having Canaanites in our land looks and feels like to us.

Having walked over the bridge between last time and this time, let me read for us all of Genesis 12, verses 4-9. I do so to remind us of the complete context and then we will zero in on verse 7. If you have access to your Bible please join me in the Word of God. The Lord gives His covenant promises to Abram and then we come to verse 4. Genesis 12.4-9.

"⁴ So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

⁶ Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. ⁷ The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' So [Abram] built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. ⁸ Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. ⁹ Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev."

Abram is in the land, because of God's promise made to him. But the Canaanite is also in the land, a real danger to Abram. And so what does God do? He appears to Abram (verse 7). Right in the middle of enemy territory what does Abram receive? Wow, he has the presence and the voice of *God!*

Please make a note of this for your own walk with the Living God: The Canaanite was then in the land, but Abram was not focused on the Canaanite. He was focused on His God. We have already identified the Canaanites and spoken of how dangerous they were. I said they were a Satanic, evil people. And so amidst such an evil, right here, God meets with His servant and He speaks to him, reiterating the promise, "To your descendants I will give this land."

This promise had already been stated, but that was *before* Abram got into the land. Now that he is there, God essentially says, "Take a look around. You see the Canaanites there. Do not fret about them. *I*, the Lord God, *I will* give your descendants this land. They *will* rule here, on this very soil."

I have more to say about this theologically/biblically in a moment, but I hope to make pastoral application now. I already know this verse, in context, speaks a powerful reminder to me. What God does in our lives, dear children of His, is not to eliminate all danger from us, but to shield and protect us within it. He is willing to meet with us and to speak with us! And His presence and His voice is most profound when we are in the most danger.

Those of you who have been in Christ a long time what is your instinct when you are in trouble? I would think it is to run to God! This is my instinct now, after many years of walking safely with the Lord Jesus. When the doctor sends a loved one for a medical test, when there is a virus ripping through the community, when there is a long separation from loved ones, when there is a country that despises our God, and a church that has apostatized. What do I do/what do we do? We settle down in the presence of our loving, heavenly Father and we wait for His voice through His Word (the Holy Scriptures) to us.

Are you waiting on the promises of God to be fulfilled in your life? Are you living amidst some danger? I have good news for you: God is with you, and He wants you to come before Him, to experience His presence and to hear His voice. My prayer for you is that you will find this circle of quiet in the midst of all your noisy surroundings. With your Bible in hand, and a quiet spirit, in prayer hear from the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Invite Him to lead you through the valleys and mountain peaks of your life – even through the valley of the shadow of death. In a land with all these modern-day Canaanites, as Abram did, take refuge in *God Almighty*.

And listen again to verse 7 of Genesis 12, “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” Did you know this is the first time in the Bible we read of an appearance of God to a person? I want to say that again to make sure you get it. Genesis 12.7 is the first time in the Bible we read of an appearance of God to a person, and this is the man Abram. Dr. Aalders writes (quote), “This is the first time in the Old Testament we are told that God ‘appeared’ to someone. In Acts 7:2 Stephen mentions the fact that God appeared to Abram in Ur of the Chaldeans also. Just what are we to understand by such a ‘theophany’? It is obvious that we must think of some kind of visible manifestation of God’s presence.

This manifestation does not come by way of a dream or a vision so that we should think of a subjective, spiritual revelation. There was definitely an objective reality that could be seen and recognized. This is clear from the Hebrew presentation which actually means to appear to someone. It implies that a visible presence comes to the person receiving the revelation. (Aalders continues.) Of course, we must maintain that God is a Spirit and as such cannot be recognized in visible form. Thus, it is not God Himself who is seen (*Bible Student’s Commentary: Genesis, Volume 1, 271-272*.)” End of the quotation from theologian Gerhard Charles Aalders.

He uses the word theophany. A theophany is the visible presence of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, and my view is that who Abram saw was a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. This is the first time the Lord appears to Abram, but certainly not the last. Here is a good reading project for the weekend. Read further ahead in the Genesis about Abram’s encounters with God, such as at Genesis 17, verse 1. The Bible says, “**Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram...**” (Genesis 17.1.)

And Genesis 18, verse 1, “**Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.**” And of course there is Genesis 16, verse 7 when Hagar experiences a theophany as well. Genesis 16.7, “**7 Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.**” Notice there it is “the angel of the Lord.” This was the pre-incarnate Christ! These are theophanies.

A notetaker may ask me to spell that. OK, t-h-e-o-p-h-a-n-y. (Theophany.) And the texts were Genesis 12.7, 16.7, 17.1, and 18.1. All of these in the Genesis.

On Monday I will have more to say about this. Please do be back with us at the start of the week, Lord willing. But as we close, I want you to think of this in your mind’s eye. Abram is in the land of Canaan. And the Canaanite was in the land. Exactly as the Bible says, “The Lord appeared to Abram” and spoke. That is, the presence and the voice of God was manifest to Abram.

We have the presence of God in our lives. The Holy Spirit dwells within every believer. And we have the voice of God in our lives. We have the Bible. This is God's *Word*. So, let us meet with God this weekend! And join together with one another again on Monday as we continue to discover who God Is.

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