

God appears to Abram, later renamed Abraham, promising numerous progeny; Abram decides to trust this God despite temporal circumstances.

A reading from the Book of Genesis: 15:1-6

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." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But 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." He 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." And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

The Word of the Lord.

Psalm 33:12-22

- ¹² Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD! *
happy the people he has chosen to be his own!
- ¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven, *
and beholds all the people in the world.
- ¹⁴ From where he sits enthroned he turns his gaze *
on all who dwell on the earth.
- ¹⁵ He fashions all the hearts of them *
and understands all their works.
- ¹⁶ There is no king that can be saved by a mighty army; *
a strong man is not delivered by his great strength.
- ¹⁷ The horse is a vain hope for deliverance; *
for all its strength it cannot save.
- ¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon those who fear him, *
on those who wait upon his love,
- ¹⁹ To pluck their lives from death, *
and to feed them in time of famine.
- ²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD; *
he is our help and our shield.
- ²¹ Indeed, our heart rejoices in him, *
for in his holy Name we put our trust.
- ²² Let your loving-kindness, O LORD, be upon us, *
as we have put our trust in you.

Without millennia of evidence to recommend trust, Abraham and his forebears have faith in God.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews: 11:1-3, 8-16

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old-- and Sarah herself was barren-- because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

The Word of the Lord.