

Genesis 15

1. The video attempted to do a fair treatment of the context—the events leading up to this chapter. So, I won't go into that, but one thing to focus on is simply the importance of Genesis 15:6 in the history of interpretation: "Abraham believed the Lord, and it was counted to him as righteousness." This verse was of great importance for Martin Luther in the 16th century, and it continued to be a key passage for the Protestant Reformation and more general Christian understandings of salvation and righteousness, particularly the idea that faith alone establishes salvation (not works). The Hebrew word is common, and this is the first usage of the word in the OT. It means believe or trust or have faith in... and when Romans 4:3 uses it, the word is translated as *pistis*, the famous NT word for faith. Abraham has a steadfast trust in God's words, and so God considers him righteous or just. This word for righteousness is also not an abnormal Hebrew word. It is used all over the OT, and it means basically what our English word righteousness means, but especially that state of being right with someone as a result of a gift or an offering—think of when you go see your in-laws and you bring them a gif that they actually really appreciate. And you also appreciate them appreciating it! That quality of rightness is what the Hebrew *Tzedakah* entails.
2. What this means for Christian theology is that the offering Abraham has is simply his trust in God. And *that* makes him a fitting covenant partner in God using Abraham and his family to bless the world. *That* makes him righteous—in a right relationship with God.
3. Finally, it is important to hammer home this idea that Abraham is, himself, the plan of salvation. Plenty of Christians think Christianity is primarily dogma or doctrine (Christian *teaching*), and it certainly involves that. But more than anything else it is *being* a chosen people of God, being the people who, in God's mercy, dwell with God.
4. Jesus of course is the most dramatic fulfillment of this covenant. Even when we fail to have *pistis*, have faith or believe, we have one Israelite who is perfect, who establishes God's presence with us permanently (in the power of the Holy Spirit and baptism). Christ's coming is thus the permanent creation of a *people*. Again, not merely a set of doctrines or teachings, but a people who know God, and love him, and follow him.