

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Genesis 15:1-6, 12-18

Sunday, December 11, 2011

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

1. What is the difference between God being your shield and God providing you with a shield? Which would you prefer? Why?

Having God surround you and cover you with His almighty power and comforting love and mercy seems better than any other object, person, or group assigned to protect you apart from God's presence. If God is your shield, when you die He will guide you safely to heaven and the place Jesus went to prepare a place for you.

2. What shield are believers supposed to take? Why do believers need this shield in addition to the protection God provides?

The New Testament tells us to take up the shield of faith, "With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16). We need to keep the shield of faith firmly in our grasp. Through faith, we maintain trust in and obedience to God. Through faith, we can know and do what God wants us to do for our protection. Through faith, we do our part in our relationship with God; then, God does not need to do His part *in spite of our lack of faith* (as when God had to save Abraham and Sarah from Abimelech after Abraham's lack of faith in God serving as his shield, see Genesis 20). Through his failure, Abraham had to learn the lesson of what God meant when God said He was his shield. God probably does this countless times in our lives, and we need to thank Him.

3. What reward did God promise Abram? Compare different translations of Genesis 15:1 (see especially the King James Version) for your answer.

God promised Abram His presence and that he would have descendants and they would inherit the Promised Land. The saving presence of the LORD is the greatest reward anyone can receive as the fruit of their faith. "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1).

4. What did God say would happen to some of Abram's descendants? How might their knowing this have helped them?

Some would be aliens and slaves. Some would enter and possess the Promised Land after their time of slavery. When they left, they would leave with possessions.

5. What did God say would happen to Abram?

He said Abram would live and die in peace, which he did, and he would live a long life, which he did. Abram lived 75 years after the birth of Isaac; so, even though Isaac was born to Abram late in his life, he did know his son for a long time.

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