

God Uses Power for Justice and Mercy

International Bible Lesson

Genesis 15:7-21

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“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance” (Genesis 15:13-14—KJV).

“Then the LORD said to Abram, ‘Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions” (Genesis 15:13-14—NRSV).

When God promised Abraham that He would give his descendants the Promised Land, He also foretold that Abraham’s descendants would experience four hundred years of slavery before He fulfilled His promise. God gave Abraham one reason for this: the Amorites had not yet become so completely evil that they no longer deserved to live in the land (Genesis 15:16). God treated the Amorites with justice and mercy when He postponed their punishment until the time of Joshua based on the principle that Peter later explained: “The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). In the time of Moses, God treated the Egyptians with justice and mercy when God gave countless numbers time to repent of their idol worship and turn to God during the ten plagues He sent upon Egypt. God treated Abraham’s descendants with justice and mercy when He influenced the Egyptians to compensate them for their four hundred years of slavery by giving them great possessions when they left Egypt; thus, the children and grandchildren of those who suffered in slavery received untold riches to take with them into the Promised Land. God always uses His power with perfect timing to achieve justice and mercy; therefore, people have good and sufficient reasons to trust and obey God.

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