

# Promises To Abraham

## *Leon Mauldin*

**Text:**

**Introduction:**

- I. Genesis 12:1-3, 7: First Statement of Promises to Abraham.
  - A. Some count a total of eight promises (Kaiser, *Messiah*, 46).
    1. God would make Abraham into a great nation.
    2. He would bless him.
    3. He would make his name great.
    4. Abraham and his seed would be a blessing to others.
    5. God would bless those who blessed him.
    6. He would curse those who curse him.
    7. Through Abraham and his seed God would be the channel of blessing to all the peoples on earth.
    8. God would give to Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan.
  - B. We will focus on the three that are ordinarily considered the summation of God's promises to Abraham.
    1. God would make of Abraham a great nation.
    2. He would give Abraham's descendants (Israel) the Promised Land.
    3. Through his Seed all nations of the earth would be blessed.
    4. These same promises are given to the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob.
  - C. As we do so, we approach the Bible as a seamless garment.
    1. There is continuity throughout the Scriptures.
    2. "The Old Testament Messianic teaching was regarded as the development of a single promise (Gr. *epangelia*), repeated and unfolded through the centuries with numerous specifications and in multiple forms but always with the same essential core" (Kaiser, *Promise*, 20).
    3. Gen. 1-11 has a connection with the Abrahamic promises.
    4. The Abrahamic promises are "... emphasized throughout the unfolding of the scheme of redemption. Indeed, the rest of the Bible is the record of the carrying out of these promises" (Waldron, 80).
      - a. There is obvious emphasis on the Abrahamic promises in Gen. 12-50.
      - b. But then Gen. 12-50 is foundational for Exodus-Malachi.
    5. This approach is utilized in a number of good sources, reflected in the bibliography.
  - D. We believe in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

1. The theory (i.e. The Documentary Hypothesis): “The Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) was not written by Moses, as claimed in the Bible, but was written after the death of Moses” (Jenkins, *Evidences*, 93).
  2. “The Documentary Theory is based on the premise that there can be no such thing as a supernatural revelation. It is a highly subjective theory based on multiple assumptions (*Ibid.*).
  3. As a starter on the refutation to the Documentary Hypothesis, see *Before Abraham Was*, by Kikawada and Quinn.
  4. Kitchen weighs in on this, concluding that the documentary theory is without evidence.
    - a. His words: “. . . even the most ardent advocate of the documentary theory must admit that we have as yet *no single scrap* [emp. His], of external, objective (i.e., tangible) evidence for either the existence or the history of “J,” “E,” or other alleged source-documents.” (Kitchen, *Orient*, 23)
- E. We believe in the historicity of the patriarchs.
1. Many, if not most, in scholarly circles do not.
    - a. K. A. Kitchen has some great material in his work, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, regarding the patriarchs, and how well the biblical material fits in with what can be known of that period from secular sources.
      - 1) See especially his chapter 7, “Founding Fathers or Fleeting Phantoms—the Patriarchs.”
    - b. “Scholars” recklessly charge the Genesis text with anachronisms and inaccuracies regarding the frequent mention of the camel, saying that such were not domesticated until much later.
      - 1) Kitchen gives evidence to the contrary, supportive of the biblical record (Kitchen, *Orient*, 79-80).
      - 2) See also Kitchen’s *Reliability* (338-339).
      - 3) See also my posts on *Leon’s Message Board* (<http://bleon1.wordpress.com/2010/10/01/isaac-went-out-to-meditate/>)
  2. Jesus accepted their historicity (Matt. 22:31-32)

## Body:

### I. Viewing the Promises in Light of Genesis 1-11, As Well As What Follows.

- A. Gen. 3:15: In Garden of Eden --First promise of Christ.
  1. The Seed of Woman would bruise the head of the Serpent.
  2. Becomes the background for NT passages such as Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8.
    - a. Fundamental significance of Gen. 3:15.
      - 1) “This is the most general and at the same time the most comprehensive foregleam of the Messiah” (Smith, 38).
      - 2) “All subsequent Messianic promises are but amplifications of that which is implicit here” (*Ibid.*).

- 3) “The verse is commonly called the *protevangelium* (first Gospel)” (*Ibid.*; cf. Wolf, 37).
  - 4) “Here in embryo state is the whole of God’s program for the human race” (*Ibid.*).
- B. Gen. 5: From Adam through Seth down to Noah.
1. There is specificity in the genealogy.
  2. No attempt is made to give a record of the whole human race.
- C. Gen. 11: From Noah through Shem down to Terah, father of Abraham.
- D. Gen. 12: Promises to Abraham.
1. At the heart of the promises to Abraham is not a new promise, but the same as Gen. 3:15.
  2. To Abraham additional promises were given that reflect the unfolding of God’s plan.
- E. Relation of the Abrahamic promises to the Gospel.
1. Gal. 3:8: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’” (ESV).
  2. Gal. 3:16: “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ” (NASB).
  3. John 8:56: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad”.

## II. The Nation Promise: “I Will Make You a Great Nation.”

- A. Note first the God of these promises.
1. “In the patriarchal narratives, there was a series of names for God. He was *El Olam*, ‘the Everlasting God’ (Ge 21:33); *El Elyon*, ‘the Most High God’ (14:18-20, 22); and *Yahweh Yireh*, ‘Yahweh will provide’ (22:14). But the most frequent and important name was *El Shaddai*, usually translated ‘God Almighty’ (17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; cf. also 49:25—‘*et Shaddai*’ (Kaiser, *Promise*, 65).
  2. The pattern of usage is clear: “This name stressed the might and power of God” (*Ibid.*, 66).
  3. Six reference in Genesis, and thirty-one in Job (also Patriarchal Age); three other places in the Pentateuch (Ex. 6:3; Num. 24:4, 16), four times in the prophets (Isa. 13:6; Joel 1:15; Ezek. 1:24; 10:5); Psa. 68:15 and Ruth 1:20-21.
  4. Stressed: “God is omnipotent and a great Sovereign who can and will act on behalf of those whom he loves and who are called according to his purpose and plan” (*Ibid.*).
- B. Actually Abraham would be the father of many nations.
1. Gen. 17:5: “for I have made you a father of many nations.
  2. Sarah would be a mother of nations (Gen. 17:16).
- C. The “nation promise” was especially and specifically concerned with the nation of Israel.
1. Gen. 13:14-15 references the “descendants” who would receive the land, hence, Israel.

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2. Contextually, the descendants included in the covenant made with Abraham were the Israelites (Gen. 15:18-21), when the “larger land promise” was given.
  3. This is seen in Gen. 17:8 also.
  4. “Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation” (Gen. 18:18).
  5. Nation promise repeated following the “sacrifice” of Isaac (Gen. 22:17).
  6. The nation promise was given to the patriarch Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4).
  7. The nation promise was given to Jacob (Gen. 28:14).
- D. How God accomplished this.
1. Jacob’s flight to Padan-Aram and the birth of his twelve sons.
  2. God’s sovereignty and providence: the preparations made by “sending” Joseph to Egypt.
  3. Note God’s word to Jacob at Beersheba, “I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation *there*” (Gen. 46:3, emp. mine, *L.M.*).
    - a. Ample proof had been given as to why God would not make of Abraham a great nation in Canaan (Gen. 32; 38; cf. 46:10).
    - b. Israel would easily have been assimilated into Canaanite culture while still just the nucleus of a nation.
    - c. In Egypt they would have a land to themselves (the N.E. delta region, Goshen) and in a culture conducive to their being a separate people (cf. Gen. 43:32; 46:34; Ex. 8:26).
- E. The Exodus.
1. Time passed.
    - a. The “four hundred years” of Gen. 15:13.
    - b. Ex. 13:40: “Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.”
  2. The Exodus is tied to the Abrahamic covenant.
    - a. “God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Ex. 2:24) and would thus act accordingly.
  3. What was demonstrated in God’s dealings with Egypt.
    - a. Israel was His son, God’s firstborn (Ex. 4:22).
    - b. The Egyptians would know who the LORD is (Ex. 7:17, etc.).
    - c. Israel would come to know the LORD (Ex. 6:7)
    - d. The plagues were judgments against the gods of Egypt (Ex. 6:6; 12:12).
- F. The character of the nation.
1. Did the nation promise merely mean that Israel would be a *numerous* people?
    - a. By now they numbered 603,550 men of war.
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- 1) Note the corresponding text of Ex. 38:25-26 — half shekel for each of the 603,550 men, totaled 301,775 shekels (cf. Wolf, 178).
  - b. “Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude” (Deut. 10:21; at 2<sup>nd</sup> numbering they were now 601,730).
2. What is stressed is the *character* of the nation God would make of Abraham.
    - a. “I will take you as My people, and I will be your God” (Ex. 6:7).
    - b. Israel was to be God’s special possession: “A special treasure to Me above all people” (Ex. 19:5).
      - 1) “The basic meaning of this noun [*segullah*] is ‘personal property.’ Well attested in Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Aramaic, the Akkadian *sakālu*, ‘to acquire property’ and *sikilm* ‘(personal) property’ are also doubtless related. While the word occurs only eight times, it is filled with theological and spiritual treasures” (TWOT, 617).
      - 2) Deut. 7:6: “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. He has chosen you to be his people, prized above all others on the face of the earth” (NET).
      - 3) Deut. 14:2: “for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession” (NIV).
      - 4) Deut. 26:18: “The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments” (NASB).
      - 5) Psalm 135:4: “For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.”
      - 6) Malachi 3:17: “They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels [*segullah*]. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him” (NKJV).
      - 7) These verses are no doubt the OT background for Titus 2:14 and 1 Pet. 2:9.
    - c. Again, what made Israel a great nation? “I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God” (Ex. 29:45).
      - 1) Their relationship with God; that Yahweh had chosen them, and that they knew Him!
      - 2) The book of Leviticus was especially designed to teach the concept of holiness.
        - a) The idea is that of an invitation to partake of the very nature of God Himself.
        - b) God is holy; therefore His people are to be holy.
      - 3) The centrality of the “shema,” Deut. 6:4-9.
- G. It was at Sinai that Israel became the great nation promised to Abraham.
    1. There they entered into covenant relationship with Him (Ex. 19-24)
    2. In summary, three important events occurred at Sinai.
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- a. The giving of the Ten Commandments and other laws and ordinances.
  - b. The building of the Tabernacle as the central place of worship.
  - c. The consecration of the Aaronic priesthood.
3. Israel was at Sinai about 11 months.
- a. This covers textually from Ex. 19:1 through Num. 10:10.
- H. We will see that this did not exhaust what was envisioned in the Abrahamic nation promise.
- 1. We will see the New Testament explanation of the ultimate application.

### III. The Land Promise.

- A. The Pentateuch kept the land promise before the nation of Israel (Ex. 13:5; 20:12; 23:23-33; Lev. 18:24-30; 20:2-24; 25:1; Num. 13-14; Deut. 1:21-25; 4:1, 16; 4:40; 6:1; 7:1; 8:1; 9:6; 11:8-12; 19:1; 25:19; 26:1-11; 28:63; 29:1-29; 32:49).
- B. The book of Joshua is a one-point book: Israel received the land of Israel.
- 1. Chapters 1-12 record the conquest.
  - 2. Chapters 13-24 record the division of the land among the twelve tribes, as well as the Levitical cities.
    - a. Note the clarity of Josh. 21:43: "So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it."
    - b. Fulfillment is stated negatively in Josh. 21:45: "Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass."
      - 1) Cf. the NET: "Not one of the LORD's faithful promises to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; every one was realized."
    - c. "Language could not be plainer; or more emphatic. And a man who will not believe what Joshua says will not believe anything he does not want to believe" (Whiteside, 87).
  - 3. God kept His promise.
    - a. Bro. Franklin Puckett made the following argument that the reception and designation of the six cities of refuge were proof that God fulfilled the land promise:
      - 1) At the point of Deut. 19, three cities had been given in Transjordan.
      - 2) Moses said: "Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three" (vv. 8-9).
      - 3) "Six cities of refuge are here appointed; three east of Jordan and three in the land of Canaan. Furthermore, they were appointed by direct command of Jehovah. Since this was to be done when God enlarged their coast and gave them all the land he had promised to give, it follows that he thought he had fulfilled his promise" (Puckett, 18-19).

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- C. Some observations re: the conquest.
1. The order of conquest: central, south and then north.
  2. First their making their way to Shechem (Josh. 8), in obedience to Deut. 27.
    - a. Significance: It was here that childless Abraham had first received the promises (Gen. 12:6).
    - b. Now that *great nation* was present to claim the *land* God had *promised* them.
    - c. The basis of everything was the word of God: “And you shall write very plainly on the stones [on Mt. Ebal] all the words of this law” (Deut. 27:8).
  3. What happened in Joshua was Israel’s taking *control* of the land; they established a “toe-hold” of sorts if you will.
    - a. Here was the plan: “And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you” (Deut. 7:22).
    - b. Meanwhile they were to make no covenants with the Canaanites, make no marriages with them, and destroy their gods (Deut. 7:1-5).
    - c. Unfortunately, Israel did not heed these instructions.
      - 1) The first two chapters of Judges tell the sad story.
      - 2) Israel disobeyed the above instructions.
      - 3) They did not “follow-through” on God’s command to drive out/kill the inhabitants of the land.
        - a) By the way, some of the cities listed, such as Beth Shean and Megiddo (Jud. 1:27), were located at crucially strategic points. It was a great loss to not have those.
        - b) Dor was a coastal city; a harbor was there (*Ibid.*).
        - c) It would turn out that the whole tribe of Dan would later migrate to the north (Jud. 1:34; 17-18).
- D. The “greater land promise.”
1. The extent of the land promise was to be “to the great river, the River Euphrates (Gen. 15:18).
  2. This was realized during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings. 4:21).
- E. Again, it wasn’t just about getting the land; it was about their faithfulness; their covenant relationship with the LORD.
1. This is the major point of Deuteronomy: Don’t worry about the giants in the land — remember Og? Don’t worry about the walled cities — God will help you take them.
    - a. What you must do is be concerned about your relationship with God. If you forsake Him and worship other gods, He will cast you out of this good land which He is giving you.
  2. When you go into the land you must worship in the place which the LORD will choose, not in the place you choose (Deut. 12).
- F. Retaining the land was conditional.
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1. “The land was to be received by *promise*, but the *retention* of the land was *conditional*; it was based upon *continued obedience* (Deut. 28:15ff)” (Jenkins, *Premillennialism*, 41).
2. See Deut. 4:25-31; 6:10-15; 8:19-20; note the “if” clauses in Lev. 26; Deut. 28:1-30:10; Josh. 23:11-13, 16.
3. Israel was removed from her land because of unfaithfulness to the LORD.

#### G. Captivity.

1. The northern kingdom fell first, 722 BC.
2. Judah went into captivity for 70 years, beginning 605 BC (Jer. 25:9; 29:10).

#### H. Return from the captivity.

1. God promised a remnant would return.
  - a. Deut. 30:8-10
  - b. Isa. 1:9; 10:20-23
  - c. Jer. 23:3; 31:7.
2. A remnant did return.
  - a. Under Zerubbabel 536 BC (Ezra 1-6).
    - 1) Temple rebuilt.
  - b. Under Ezra 458 BC (Ezra 7-10)
    - 1) Emphasis: restoring the teaching and practice of God’s law.
  - c. Under Nehemiah 444 BC (Neh. 1-12, then later ch. 13).
  - d. Related passages.
    - 1) Ezra 9:8-15.
    - 2) Neh. 1:3, 8-10.
    - 3) Hag. 1:12-14; 2:2.
    - 4) Zech. 8:6, 11-12.
3. Prophecies pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem.
  - a. Matt. 24 and parallels.
  - b. Lk. 17:22-37.
4. Nothing further remains to be fulfilled regarding the physical land of Israel.

#### I. Prophecies in which the land is used symbolically of God’s blessings.

1. “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. ‘For I,’ says the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst’” (Zech. 2:4-5).
2. The stream of water that flows from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar, down to the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:1-12).
  - a. Point: the spiritual blessings that would come in the Messianic age.

3. In a clearly Messianic context, God says, “You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married” (Isa. 62:4)
4. The temple described in Ezekiel 40-43 was never built (physically speaking), nor was it ever intended to be.
  - a. No effort was made by those who returned with Zerubbabel to follow this text as a pattern (Ezra 1-6; Haggai 1-2; Zech. 1-4).
5. The thing that made the coming “city” special was it was named *YHWH Shammah* (Ezek. 48:35).
6. The promised rest that remains is “a better country, a heavenly” (Heb. 11:16)
  - a. The “rest” that remains is discussed in Hebrew 3-4.

**IV. Spiritual Blessing Promise: In Your Seed All the Nations of the Earth Shall Be Blessed (Gen. 22:18); Tracing Promise Through the Scriptures.**

**A. Linguistic note:**

1. “In the statements regarding the future blessing of all nations two different forms of the verb *to bless* are used” (Smith, 49).
  - a. The *Niphal* form is used in 12:3; 18:18 and 28:14.
  - b. The *Hithpael* form is used in 22:18 and 26:4.
2. *Hithpael* is a reflexive verbal form. “The basic idea conveyed by this form is that the nations would regard themselves as blessed in the seed of Abraham” (*Ibid.*).
3. The *Niphal* form is usually rendered by the passive voice. “. . . the idea is that nations will, as a matter of fact, be blessed *in or through* Abraham” (*Ibid.*).
4. “The *Niphal* form thus states the objective fact of blessing, while the *Hithpael* form sets forth the subjective impression which this blessing will have on the recipients” (*Ibid.*).

**B. Same as Seed of woman Gen. 3:15.**

**C. Promised to Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:3; 26:4; 28:14).**

**D. Lineage goes through Judah (Gen. 49:10).**

1. Explains information included in Gen. 38.
2. Lineage will go through Judah’s son Perez.

**E. Balaam predicted, “A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel” (Num. 24:17).**

**F. Moses foretold the Prophet through Whom God would speak (Deut. 18:18).**

**G. In that cyclical period of the Judges, God was working “behind the scenes,” continuing to move His plan forward.**

1. Ruth 1:1: “. . . in the days when the judges ruled”; then 4:18ff., which traces the lineage from Judah’s son Perez down to David.

**H. The promise given to David in 2 Sam. 7.**

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1. Not a new promise.
  2. Another development in the plan to bless all nations of the earth through Abraham's Seed.
- I. At times God's hand reached down in obvious ways to intervene.
1. On three occasions the thread of the Messianic hope was hanging in the balance by one life.
    - a. When Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat became king in Judah, the first thing he did was to kill all his brothers (2 Chron. 21:4).
    - b. A band of raiders came into Judah who killed all of Jehoram's sons except Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:1).
    - c. When Ahaziah was killed by Jehu, wicked Athaliah (Ahaziah's mother) killed all of his sons, her own grandsons, and then usurped the throne (2 Chron. 22:10).
      - 1) She did not know that Jehoiada the priest, and Jehoshabath his wife, hid baby Joash (2 Chron. 22:11-12).
  2. Later in the days of Esther, God intervened to prevent Haman from destroying all the Jews throughout the Persian Empire.
    - a. It's not simply that this would have been a tragic case of genocide; the Messianic hope would never have been realized had Haman succeeded.
- J. The Prophets.
1. As Peter said: "Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days" (Acts 3:24).
    - a. He was referencing specifically the fulfillment of the Seed promise: "And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Acts 3:25).
    - b. "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3:26).
      - 1) We learn that the promised Seed is Christ.
      - 2) The blessing is that of forgiveness of sins, and by extension, all spiritual blessings.
  2. Ninth Century Prophets.
    - a. Obadiah.
      - 1) On Mt. Zion there shall be deliverance (Ob. 17-21).
    - b. Joel
      - 1) The promised Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).
      - 2) Fulfilled in Acts 2.
      - 3) Again, this is through the promised Seed of Abraham.
  3. Eighth Century Prophets.
    - a. Jonah.
      - 1) Teaches us that God is the God of the nations.
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- b. Amos.
    - 1) Raise up the fallen tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11-15).
    - 2) Gentiles are to be included.
    - 3) Quoted by James in Acts 15:16-18.
  - c. Hosea.
    - 1) Promise of mercy, of being the people of God (Hosea 2:21-23).
    - 2) Applied by Paul to Gentiles Romans 9:24-26.
    - 3) Applied by Peter to “pilgrims of the Dispersion” (1 Pet. 2:1; 2:10)
      - a) H. Hailey understood this to be referencing Jews.
      - b) Others, including Lenski, Hamilton, Woods believe the word *dispersion* is used in the sense of “pilgrim” or “sojourner” and would be inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles, observing that the areas referenced would be predominately Gentile.
  - d. Isaiah.
    - 1) The most Messianic of all the prophets! This list is not exhaustive.
      - a) Isa. 2:2-4: the mountain of the LORD’S house.
      - b) Isa. 4:2-4: the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful...Mt. Zion
      - c) Isa. 7:14: the virgin birth; Immanuel.
      - d) Isa. 9:6-7: For unto us a Child is born
      - e) Isa. 11:6-11: the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb. . . Root of Jesse
      - f) Isa. 40:3: the work of John.
      - g) Isa. 42:1-4: how Jesus went about His ministry, cf. 49:8-9.
      - h) Isa. 53:1-12: Jesus vicarious suffering and death; what would result.
      - i) Isa. 61:1-2: Anointed of the LORD.
    - 2) This is not a departure from the promise, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.
  - e. Micah
    - 1) Contemporary with Isaiah.
    - 2) Also spoke of the “latter days,” Mic. 4:1-3.
    - 3) Spoke with specificity on the birthplace of the Messiah Mic. 5:2.
    - 4) There was another Bethlehem — that of Zebulun (Josh. 19:10, 15)
      - a) Modern sign reads, “Bet Lehem HaGelilit,” *Bethlehem of the Galilee*.
      - b) See my article, “Bethlehem of the Galilee,” *Biblical Insights*, May 2010.
    - 5) “You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea,” Mic. 7:19
      - a) Again, this is how all nations are blessed through the Seed.
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4. Seventh Century Prophets.
    - a. Nahum
      - 1) God rules in the kingdoms of men; he had used Assyria.
      - 2) He had used Assyria as His chastening rod; now Assyria's own destruction was imminent.
    - b. Habbakuk.
      - 1) God is sovereign.
      - 2) He would use Babylon to punish Judah, then he would punish Babylon.
      - 3) Lesson: No matter what, "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. 3:18.
    - c. Zephaniah.
      - 1) Looking beyond the Return to "My holy mountain."
        - a) Such passages should be seen in light of Heb. 12:18-24.
      - 2) Emphasis: The LORD is in your midst (Zeph. 3:5, 15, 17).
  5. Captivity Prophets.
    - a. Daniel.
      - 1) Dan. 2:44, the kingdom which shall never be destroyed.
      - 2) Dan. 7:9-14, the "One like the Son of Man" would approach the "Ancient of Days" and receive "dominion and glory and a kingdom."
    - b. Ezekiel.
      - 1) "I will remember My covenant with you," Ezek. 16:60; cf. 34:22-26; 37:26.
      - 2) "When I provide you an atonement," Ezek. 16:63
      - 3) "One King," Ezek. 37:22.
      - 4) "Then they shall be My people and I will be their God," Ezek. 37:23, 27.
      - 5) "David My servant shall be king over them," Ezek. 37:24.
      - 6) "They shall all have one shepherd," Ezek. 37:24.
      - 7) The section of chapters 40-48 is an apocalyptic portrayal of how the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's Seed.
    - c. Jeremiah.
      - 1) "Will raise to David a Branch of righteousness," Jer. 23:5; cf. 33:15.
      - 2) "A King shall reign and prosper," Jer. 23:5.
      - 3) The New Covenant, Jer. 31:31-34.
      - 4) Lamentations: How did Jeremiah cope?
        - a) "Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not," Lam. 3:22.
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- 1] It is difficult to capture the nuances of the Hebrew word *khesed*. When used of the Lord it is often connected to his covenant loyalty (NET notes).
  - b) “They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” Lam. 3:23.
  - c) God’s proven covenant loyalty was the basis of the prophet’s firm resolve expressed in Lam. 3:24-42.
6. Post-Captivity Prophets.
- a. Haggai.
    - 1) Zerubbabel, God’s chosen signet ring (Hag. 2:23).
    - 2) “The honor bestowed on Zerubbabel was not realized in him as a person, but in his office and lineage. Matthew confirms the fulfillment of this promise as he points out that Jesus is the heir to the throne of David through Coniah and Zerubbabel (1:12, 16)” (Hailey, 315).
  - b. Zechariah.
    - 1) Jerusalem to be inhabited as towns without walls Zech. 2:4.
    - 2) “The Man whose name is the BRANCH!” Zech. 6:12
    - 3) “So He shall be a priest on His throne” Zech. 6:13
    - 4) “The Holy Mountain” Zech. 8:3.
    - 5) Triumphal Entrance Zech. 9:9-10
    - 6) Thirty pieces of silver Zech. 11:12.
    - 7) For the potter Zech. 11:13.
    - 8) “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” Zech. 13:7.
  - c. Malachi.
    - 1) John to prepare the way of the Lord Mal. 3:1
    - 2) Elijah Mal. 4:5-6.

**V. The Word Became Flesh — the Arrival of the Promised Seed.**

- A. Note the connection between Malachi 4:4-5 and Luke 1:16-17.
  1. Again, God never lost sight of His purpose to bring Christ into the world, to fulfill His covenant with Abraham.
  2. He used the kingdoms of men (Persia, Greece, Rome) to bring about optimal conditions for the advent of Christ, i.e., “the fullness of the time” (Gal. 4:4).
- B. Mary made the connection between the good news she received regarding Jesus’ birth — “He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever” (Lk. 1:54).
- C. Zacharias, cf. Lk. 1:67-79.
  1. Note his inspiration v. 67.
  2. Key words: redeemed (v. 68), salvation (v. 69), house of David (v. 69) holy prophets (v. 70).

3. To remember His holy covenant (v. 72)
  4. The oath which He swore to our father Abraham (v. 73)
  5. John would be the prophet of the Highest (v. 76).
  6. Knowledge of salvation by remission of sins (v. 77)
  7. Through the tender mercy of our God with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us (v. 78).
- D. Paul's sermon in Antioch of Pisidia Acts 13.
1. Makes the connection between the resurrection of Jesus and the Patriarchal blessing, Acts 13:32-33.
  2. "The promise which was made to the fathers" (v. 32).
  3. "God has fulfilled this" (v. 33).
  4. "Through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins" (v. 38).
  5. "By Him everyone who believes is justified from all things . . ." (v. 39).
- E. Gal. 3:16: "Paul's inspired interpretation of the word *seed* in the Patriarchal promise is instructive" (Smith, 50).
1. Text: "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ."
  2. "The Apostle saw significance in the fact that the promise was made to Abraham's *seed* (singular), not *seeds* (plural)" (*Ibid.*).
  3. "That seed—that individual—of who God spoke in the promise was Messiah" (*ibid.*).
  4. Paul "was an inspired apostle and what he says here must be regarded as the true intent of the statement in Genesis 22:18" (*Ibid.*, 50-51).

## VI. New Testament Explanation of the Abrahamic NATION Promise.

- A. Acts 2 has been appropriately called "the Hub of the Bible" (*Hub*, Bales).
- B. It is in Acts 3 that Peter's preaching is specifically linked with the Abrahamic promise.
1. "We here have [in Acts 3:25-26] an authoritative interpretation of the promise to Abraham. It is fulfilled, according to Peter, in turning living men away from their iniquities. Those only who turn away from their iniquities are the recipients of the promised blessing; and the fact that all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed, does not affect this conclusion, except by extending its application to those among all kindreds who shall turn from their iniquities. To Peter's hearers this concluding remark not only conveyed this information, but it recalled the exhortation, 'Turn again,' by telling them that God had sent Jesus for the very purpose of turning them from iniquity" (McGarvey, 65-66).
- C. Romans 4 and the Nation Promise: "As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations'" (v. 17).
1. "The promise to Abraham that Paul cites in 4:17, 'I have appointed you father of many nations,' is drawn from Gen. 17:5 LXX, which elaborates the promise given to Abraham in 15:5 (cf. 12:2)" (Seifrid, in Beale and Carson, 625-626).

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- a. “. . . in rabbinic tradition 17:5 was applied to proselytes. Paul, however, sees the portent of something larger in these words” (*Ibid.*).
  2. Context: justification by faith Rom. 4:1-8.
  3. The father of all those who believe Rom. 4:11.
  4. Those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham Rom. 4:12.
  5. Those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all Rom. 4:16.
    - a. Includes both Jews and Gentiles.
    - b. The promise transcends both natural and ethnic lineage.
- D. Gal. 3:8: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, In you all the nations shall be blessed.”
1. Greek verb (*proeuangelizomai*) translated as “proclaimed the gospel ahead of time”
  2. Note how “Scripture” and “God” are closely identified.
    - a. God said these things to Abraham.
    - b. Here, *Scripture* preached, saying. . .
    - c. God and His word are inseparable!
  3. “So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham” (Gal. 3:9).
    - a. The blessing is justification by faith v. 8.
    - b. “Another incorrect view is that ‘shall be blessed’ does not include justification. The term is wider than ‘shall be justified,’ but justification is the central blessing without which no spiritual blessings other than this come to anybody” (Lenski, 138).
    - c. “In this very sentence [v. 8] we have the statement ‘that God *justifies* the Gentiles from faith’ as the thing the Scriptures foresaw and by God’s own mouth told Abraham in advance in the words: ‘There shall be blessed,’ etc.” (*Ibid.*).
  4. “And if you are Christ’s then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29).
    - a. “If one is not Christ’s he is not one of Abraham’s blessed seed. If he is Christ’s, he is a child of Abraham, and an heir to the promise” (Bales, *Prophecy*, 230).
    - b. “This is far more important than a temporary dwelling place in Palestine” (*Ibid.*).
  5. Paul is not injecting these meanings into the OT; they were there already! (cf. Waldron, 87).
  6. Further, “the apostle’s point is not simply that we should believe as Abraham believed (though that is true enough and critically important), but that those who believe become the recipients of the redemptive blessings associated with the patriarch” (Silva, in Beale and Carson, 793).
    - a. Believers are the true descendants and heirs of Abraham Gal. 3:8.
    - b. Paul brings up again the reception of the Abrahamic blessing at the conclusion of the next paragraph Gal. 3:13.
    - c. Contrasts the Abrahamic covenant with the Sinaitic covenant Gal. 3:15-18.
    - d. Supports this paragraph with quotation re: the seed of Abraham Gal. 3:16.
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e. Expands on the redemptive-historical significance of the Sinaitic covenant Gal. 3:19-25.

f. Brings this part of the argument to a summation by emphasizing that the true children of God are made up of the Abraham's seed Gal. 3:26-29

1) Note: Points a-f are from Moises Silva, who authored the Galatians chapter in Beale and Carson.

## VII. The Abrahamic Promises and the Modern State of Israel.

A. Post-biblical history of the land of Israel. (For a more detailed time-line, see *Christian History* issue 97, "The Holy Land.").

1. As Roman rule ended near the end of the fourth century, the country came under the domain of the Byzantine Empire (AD 324-638)
  - a. In the seventh century, the Persians had a short reign of twenty-two years. They sacked Jerusalem in 614.
  - b. Emperor Heraclius invades Persia 630.
2. The Moslem Arabs were in power as of AD 638.
  - a. Caliph Abd al-Malik builds Dome of the Rock (AD 691).
3. The Crusader period was from 1099 to 1291.
4. Next the Mameluke Moslems were in control until 1517.
5. The period of Turkish rule was from AD 1517 to 1917.
6. The British defeated the Turks. British Mandate over Palestine was 1918-1948.

B. Establishment of the State of Israel.

1. November 29, 1947 the United Nations voted to establish independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine.
2. On May 17, 1948, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel.
3. The State of Israel was immediately recognized by President Truman.
4. May 15, 1948, war broke out, with Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, the Arab Legion of Transjordan and a Palestinian Arab militia combining forces against Israel.
  - a. Israel was victorious, and their land holdings were expanded.
  - b. From this point reference was made to the West Bank, the land belonging to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, situated between the State of Israel and the Jordan River.
  - c. A result of Israel's victory was that many Palestinian Arabs were forced to leave or chose to leave their homes.
5. In 1956 Israel defeated Egypt in Sinai.
6. June 5-10, 1967 (The Six-Day War).
  - a. Result: Israel tripled its land. "Following an armistice the conquered territories of the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank of Jordan,, and the Golan Heights remained occupied by Israel" (Jenkins, *Middle East*, 4).

- b. “The Israelis also captured Jerusalem and gained access to the Western Wall of the temple area” (*Ibid.*).
- C. Relation of the State of Israel to the Abrahamic promises.
  - 1. The modern state of Israel is not to be identified with the nation of Israel of which we read in the Bible.
  - 2. See chart below which compares the Modern Israeli State with the Israel of Biblical Times (F. Jenkins, *Middle East*, 5).

Biblical Nation of Israel	Modern State of Israel
<p><b>1. Established Under the Law of Moses.</b>                      A. Saul, David, Solomon, et.al.                      B. After the captivity – return to be under the Law (Dt. 30:1-10). Return was under the Law. See Ezra 7:10; Neh. 8.</p> <p><b>2. Had a King.</b>                      Saul, David, Solomon: Davidic line continued in Judah till Jeconiah (Jer. 22:28-30). This means that even a restored literal kingdom could not prosper. Yet David (Christ) to be king in future (Ezek. 37:24-28). Refers to spiritual kingdom, the church.</p> <p><b>3. Possesses All the Territory Promised to Abraham</b> (Gen. 15:18-21), David (2 Sam. 8:3), and Solomon (1 Kings 4:21).</p> <p><b>4. Had a Central Place of Worship – the Temple</b> (1 Kings 8:1-10):</p> <p><b>5. Priests of the Tribe of Levi.</b></p> <p><b>6. Animal Sacrifices Offered.</b></p> <p><b>7. Tribes Identifiable</b> (2 Sam. 5:1-5).</p>	<p><b>1. No Longer Under Law of Moses.</b>                      Gal. 3:19-29; 4:21-32; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14-15; Rom. 7:4</p> <p><b>2. No King.</b></p> <p><b>3. Possesses Only Part of Land Promised to Abraham.</b></p> <p><b>4. No Temple.</b>                      The second temple was destroyed by the Romans in A. D. 70.</p> <p><b>5. No Priests.</b>                      The priesthood has been changed (Heb. 7:12).</p> <p><b>6. No Sacrifices.</b> After return from captivity some were not allowed to eat holy things until there was a priest (Ezra 2:63).</p> <p><b>7. No Tribal Identity.</b></p>

- D. “It has now become clear that the establishment of the state of Israel, May 14, 1948, *in unbelief* — for those who established it are still rejecting the Christ — has nothing whatsoever to do with divine prophecy!” (Hendrickson quoted by Holland, 87).
- E. “Whatever future awaits the Jew it must await him in Christ and only if he accepts Christ. Romans 11 shows that whenever any turn to Christ they shall be saved, but if they persist in their unbelief they shall be lost” (Bales, *Prophecy*, 236).
- F. But the land is promised as an “everlasting possession” (Gen. 17:8).
  - 1. Definition: (*olam*) -- long duration, antiquity, futurity (Brown, #7138)

2. “. . . the term can be used in the sense of *unlimited duration*, or in the sense of a *cycle* or an *age*” (Jenkins, *Middle East*, 6).
  - a. “The term *olam* is used of many things in the Old Testament that clearly are not of unlimited duration: covenant (Ex. 31:16; cf. Heb. 7:11-12); incense (Ex. 30:8); Sabbath observance (Ex. 31:17); circumcision (Gen. 17:13; cf. Gal. 5:1-4), et. al.” (*Ibid.*).
  - b. Deut. 15:17: A slave “. . . was to serve his master *forever*, i.e. throughout his life” (Bales, *Prophecy*, 231).
  - c. “In regard to the land of Canaan the term *everlasting* must be used in the sense of ‘a long time’ or ‘long duration,’ a cycle or age” (Jenkins, 6).

### Conclusion:

- I. God fulfilled His promise to make of Abraham a great nation.
  - A. The nation of Israel, His holy covenant people.
  - B. But the New Testament shows clearly that the ultimate application is those who are of faith.
- II. God fulfilled His promise to give Abraham’s descendants the land of Canaan.
  - A. This was realized in the days of Joshua.
  - B. The greater extent of rule was realized in the days of David and Solomon.
  - C. Promises to bring the remnant back to the land were fulfilled.
  - D. The “rest” that remains for the people of God is not the land of Canaan, but heaven (Heb. 4:9ff.).
- III. God fulfilled His promise to bless all nations of the earth through Abraham’s Seed.
  - A. That seed is Christ.
  - B. Reference is to salvation and all spiritual blessings in Him.
- IV. Our Response.
  - A. Thank God for His eternal plan and purpose, determined before the foundation of the world.
  - B. It includes you and me!
  - C. We are the recipients of the hope of all the ages!
  - D. May our lives be lived with one goal: to glorify our great God.

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