

The Promises: Land and Seed

The Land Promise

Covenants are promises between at least two entities and contain in them certain requirements in order to assure their validity and longevity. In other words the life of any covenant is based on the condition that all parties keep their end of the bargain. Such was the case between God and Abraham and Abraham's lineage, the Israelites. God has always and will always keep His word but such seems to never have been the nature of mankind.

In Genesis 22:17, God promised Abraham that He would bless him and “surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore” (*Gen 22:17*). He later promised Moses, who in turn relayed it to Israel, that He would “bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that He swore to your fathers to give you” (*Deu 7:13*). All of this was obviously conditional. But this offspring had to have a homeland for that promise to be realized.

Gen 13:14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring **forever**. (*emp. added*)

The word for “forever” has been taken out of context by those who wish to claim that the Abrahamic covenant is still in effect. But a simple study concerning context will show otherwise. Abraham received the covenant of circumcision that was to be between him and his offspring as “an everlasting covenant” (*Gen 17:7*).

Gen 17:8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an **everlasting possession**, and I will be their God.” (*emp. added*)

God then gave Abraham a sign or acknowledgement that was to be Abraham's signature of the covenant, circumcision, when “Abraham was ninety-nine years old” (*Gen 17:24*) and after that Isaac was conceived. We know that circumcision was established long before the Law which came 430 years later (*Gal 3:17*). It would become an ordinance of the Mosaic between God and Israel which was later nailed to the cross (*Col 2:14*) even though God told Abraham that circumcision was “a sign of the covenant between Me and you” (*v.11*).

If the sign, circumcision, became null and void, so also would the covenant. Therefore, the word “forever” here has to do with a timeframe within a given dispensation. According to context here, that dispensation points to the Mosaic which ended at the cross of Christ and made “obsolete” (*Heb 8:13*) with the destruction of Jerusalem and the sacrificial system in AD 70. It also ushered in the final Christian dispensation or age.

Concerning this part of the Law, the apostles and elders met at Jerusalem to settle the matter of the Gentile converts having to keep certain ordinances in the Law of Moses in order to be saved. This question arose after “some men came down from Judea” teaching the necessity of circumcision. In other words, in their thinking, since only Jews could be saved, Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism before they could rightly be Christians. By inspiration Peter spoke up at that meeting since he was the first to approach the Gentiles regarding their salvation (*Act 10*).

Act 15:8 And God, Who knows the heart, bore witness to them (*Gentiles*), by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us, 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. 10 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the (*Gentile*) disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Paul, having attended that meeting, would later write to the Gentiles at Rome and Galatia who were being intimidated by some Judaizing heretics concerning this.

Rom 2:29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Gal 5:3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole Law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the Law; you have fallen away from grace.

Some have stated that the land promise, to be complete, has yet to occur, although not according to multiple passages. The promise to Abraham concerning the land was fulfilled when the children of Israel possessed it after leaving Egypt once their wanderings in the wilderness for forty years had come to an end. In Acts 7, Steven stated in verse 7 that Israel would “serve Me (*God*) in this place” and in verse 17 when “the people grew and multiplied in Egypt... the time of the promise drew nigh”. What promise? The oath that they would receive the land of Canaan that God made with them in Gen 15:18. Once the conquest of Canaan drew to an end Joshua wrote the following before his death.

Jos 21:43 Thus the LORD gave to Israel **all the land** that **He swore** to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. 44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as He had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. 45 **Not one word of all the good promises** that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; **all came to pass.** (*emp. added*)

After Israel again broke the covenant with the Lord and had gone into Babylonian captivity for 70 years, the cry to rebuild Jerusalem came to the ears of Persian King Artaxerxes. Having sent Nehemiah with letters to begin the rebuild, Nehemiah led Israel in returning to the land of promise to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

Neh 9:7 You are the LORD, the God Who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. 8 You found his heart faithful before You, and made with him the covenant **to give to his offspring** the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And **You have kept Your promise, for You are righteous.** (*emp. added*)

The Abrahamic promise having to do with the land of Palestine was fulfilled according to Joshua. God told Israel that after they suffered captivity for their disobedience He would have pity on them and once they truly repented He would restore their inheritance. And even though He sent judges and kings to lead His people Israel time and again, once those leaders died the

Israelites would again rebel against the Lord.

1Sa 12:9 But they forgot the LORD their God. And He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab. And they fought against them. 10 And they cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. But now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, that we may serve You.'

Thus showing that the Bible is clear that Israel received all that was promised in the covenant God made with them concerning the land of their inheritance according to scripture.

The Seed Promise

Even though Abraham was promised his offspring would be innumerable, and that they would inherit Palestine forever (*within the dispensation named until it ended*), the ultimate promise was that Christ would come through the lineage that initiated with Abraham being the father of the Jewish nation.

Gen 22:17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

The promise began with Abraham and continued through Isaac and then Jacob, who was Israel, and then Judah, through David and finally to Christ Who fulfilled it. It wasn't intended to pass through *Abraham's concubine Hagar's son Ishmael (*Gal 4:22-28*), nor through Jacob's twin brother Esau (*Rom 9:13*) or through any of the other eleven Patriarchs. The promise was focused down through the genealogical tree (*Mat 1*) to the last of Abraham's offspring according to the Divine assurance where it ended with the Christ.

**Ishmael was conceived before Abraham was circumcised.*

Gal 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," Who is Christ.

"The original intention of the promise was that there should be a limitation, and that limitation was made from age to age, until it terminated in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. By being thus narrowed down from age to age, and limited by successive revelations, it was shown that the Messiah was eminently intended, which is what Paul says here. The promise was indeed at first general, and the term used was of the most general nature; but it was shown from time to time that God intended that it should be applied only to one branch or portion of the family of Abraham; and that limitation was finally so made as to terminate in the Messiah."

Albert Barnes

It was through Abraham's faith that he left his home to go into the land that God would show him that would be promised to him and his offspring "forever". It was Abraham's faith that caused him to offer up Isaac with the idea that God would return him alive because it was said

that “through Isaac” would the seed come (*Heb 11:18*). Whether before and after his own circumcision at the age of ninety-nine, Abraham proved faithful to God, which made him the father of faith to all who believe, both Jew and Gentile alike.

Rom 4:9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. 13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the Law but through the righteousness of faith.

Rom 4:16 That is why it depends on faith (*Gk.4102- reliance upon Christ for salvation*), in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the Law (*the Jew*) but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham (*which he had before he was circumcised*), who is the father of us all, 17 as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in Whom he believed, Who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

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