

## IV.5. Lambs to Rams: The Promises: Land &amp; 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 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: 15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed **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 unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, 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, which knoweth the hearts, bare them (*Gentiles*) witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *He did* unto us (*Act 2:4; 10:46*); 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the (*Gentile*) disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that

through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

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 he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is *that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Gal 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen 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 And the LORD gave unto Israel **all the land** which **He sware** to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 There **failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken** unto the house of Israel; **all came to pass**. (*Emp. added*) (Act 13:19)

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 (*Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes were Persian kings who authorized the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple- Ezra 6:14*). 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 Thou *art* the LORD the God, Who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; 8 And foundest his heart faithful before Thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, **to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed Thy words;** for **Thou art 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 And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host 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 unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve Thee.

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 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast 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 to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of One, And to thy Seed, which 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" the seed would come (*Heb 11:18*). Whether before or 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 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised. 13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Rom 4:16 Therefore *it is* of faith (*Gk.4102- reliance upon Christ for salvation*), that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the Law (*the Jew*), but to that also which is of 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 thee a father of many nations,) before Him  
Whom he believed, *even* God, Who quickeneth the dead,  
and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

## IV.5. Questions

1. True or false: A covenant is still valid if only one entity adheres to it. a) true; b) false; c) the text does not say.
2. In Old Testament terms, how long does “forever” stand for? a) until the end of time; b) as long the dispensation it refers to lasts; c) until after the judgment.
3. The Mosaic practice of circumcision was specifically made null and void when? a) 70 AD; b) when Jesus came; c) at the cross.
4. Why did some Jews feel that Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved? a) they felt circumcision was what saved; b) they felt only Jews could become Christians; c) Gentiles couldn’t be circumcised.
5. When was the land promise fulfilled to Israel? a) it wasn’t; b) once they possessed it according to Joshua; c) once Moses set foot in the promised land.
6. What brought about the final end to the Mosaic sacrificial system? a) civil wars within the walls of Jerusalem; b) the destruction of Jerusalem; c) the Christians leaving Jerusalem.
7. Who terminated the offspring of Abraham? a) God; b) Abraham; c) Christ.
8. How can it be said that Abraham was the father to all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile? a) he was the father of all nations; b) he was recognized for his faith before and after he was circumcised; c) he was given the covenant of circumcision.