

2. Promises to Abraham Fulfilled (Answers) Hebrews 11, Galatians 3

Commitment:

Remind the class that each man must commit to teach these lessons to his wife/family each week. Ask how it went this past week, what difficulties were experienced, what questions they got asked, etc. Here is a suggested e-mail to send out in advance:

One purpose of the class is to equip you with the big picture of what the Bible is all about. Another purpose, equally important, is to help you in your role as priest of your own home.

You committed not only to attend unless providentially hindered but also to teach the material to your wife. If you can't meet the requirements of the course you need to gracefully bow out. That said, quitting is not what I want you to do. I want you to succeed in teaching your wife.

Purpose to teach her a little each day rather than cramming it in all at once. You probably don't know it well enough to teach it all at once. Master a little, teach a little, master a little more, then teach that, and gradually cover it all. If scheduling is a problem, have a talk with her about it and see if you two can agree on a time and way to discuss the concepts you are learning.

Feel free to call me with questions about the material.

One makes time for the things he really wants to do.

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Ti 2:2

See you tonight!

Review:

The Bible is a record of various covenants made between God and man. Arguably, the most significant covenant in the Old Testament is the one between God and Abraham. **What three things did God promise Abraham (Ge 12, 15, 18)?** The three things God promised Abraham were **land, seed and blessing**. It clearly is a central theme throughout Genesis and indeed, the whole of the Old Testament.

Introduction: Today's lesson focuses on how God's covenant with Abraham applies to us today as we explore its New Testament fulfillments. In short, Jesus and the new covenant are the direct fulfillments of the promises made to Abraham.

— The Promised Land —

******God promised Abraham real estate in the Middle East (roughly the land occupied by modern Israel, Genesis 12 & 15). What can we learn about this promise from Joshua 21:43-45, 1 Kings 4:21 and Nehemiah 9:7-8?** The boundaries originally given to Abraham appear to be greater than the land area the Hebrews eventually occupied. Some people claim the Hebrews never actually possessed all the land God promised to Abraham. Therefore, to be true to His word, God must one day in the future grant a restored nation of Israel every acre of real estate promised in Genesis. To see if this is so, we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.

ESV **Joshua 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 . . . Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

ESV **1 Kings 4: 21** Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt.

ESV **Nehemiah 9:7-8** You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. 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.

Conclusion: According to the above texts, the Hebrews did indeed obtain all the real estate God intended for them to have. **The land promise was fulfilled.** As we study the full extent of the fulfillments of promises made to Abraham (which were prophecies), we must remember to consider the differing types of Biblical literature (history, poetry, prophecy). Thus, we must read the Bible not merely **literally**, but also **literarily** (considering that prophecy is treated far different than history). For example, prophecies often contain hyperbole and sometimes double fulfillments.

******Abraham never built a house in the Promised Land. He lived in tents the whole rest of his life. According to Hebrews 11:8-10, why did Abraham live like a stranger in the Promised Land?** The New Testament reveals metadata beyond what was recorded in Genesis. Abraham was looking for something far more significant than Middle Eastern real estate. He understood the literal Promised Land was just a shadow, a type, a token of something much greater: *spiritual reality, spiritual real estate*. Abraham knew this; he “got” it. In fact, almost everything in the Old Testament is a type of the reality that is in Christ and the New Covenant.

What city has foundations with God as its designer and builder (Heb 11:10)? See *Revelation 3:12, 21:2*. This is a supernatural city. Abraham was not seeking a ghost town, nor the lost city of Atlantis. Abraham was looking for the city called elsewhere in Scripture the New Jerusalem.

ESV **Hebrews 13:14** . . . here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

ESV **Revelation 21:1ff** I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

In a sense, the heavenly Jerusalem represents the bride of Christ, the church. This is the city whose foundations are laid by God. Its only citizens are those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life. This city is both now (the church) and not yet (heaven).

******In direct contrast to Old Testament pronouncements, why does Hebrews 11:13-16 conclude that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not get the things that were promised? See also 11:39.** According to 11:13, they did *not* receive the things promised because they were looking for the ultimate fulfillments, which did not begin until Christ was born. They were seeking a *heavenly* country, not earthly real estate. The Middle Eastern real estate called the Promised Land was only a type, only a shadow, only a picture of the true, the real, the actual *heavenly* country.

ESV **Hebrews 11:39** . . . all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised . . .

According to Hebrews 11:16, what has God prepared for these people? Compare 11:10. God has prepared a city for them. This is the city with foundations that Abraham was looking for, 11:10, 39.

Sometimes heaven is compared to a **country** and other times to a **city**.

Insight: Abraham understood that the Promised Land was just a shadow, a type, of something much better to come: A heavenly country and a heavenly city!

Synthesis: According to Hebrews 11, Abraham lived as a stranger in the literal Promised Land of Canaan because he was looking for something better, a "heavenly country" and a city whose builder is God (the New Jerusalem). Thus, there was an immediate, physical fulfillment (Canaan, the *literal* fulfillment) and finally a long-term, ultimate fulfillment (a heavenly country, the *literary* fulfillment).

— The Promised Blessing —

******Genesis 12:3, 22:18 & 26:4 predicted that all the families of the earth will be blessed through Abraham. According to Galatians 3:6-9 and 3:13-14, how has this been fulfilled?** *See also Romans 4:1-8, Acts 3:24-26.* The promised blessing is that of justification by faith, just as Abraham was justified by faith (Ge 15:6).

Romans 4:1-8 ~ Also read Romans 4:1-8 and note the association of blessing with justification by faith.

ESV **Acts 3:25-26** You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant [Jesus], sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

— The Promised Seed —

7. Letting Scripture interpret Scripture, what can we conclude about the promised seed (Ge 22:17) from 1 Kings 4:20? According to the Scriptures, the seed promise was fulfilled in that Abraham had a multitude of descendants. Note the original prophecy and its stated fulfillment were stated with hyperbole. There were not literally as many of them as there is sand. That is a literary device to make the literally point that Abraham had a lot of descendants.

ESV **1 Kings 4:20** Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy.

******According to Galatians 3:16, who is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to give Abraham "seed" (Ge 12:7)?** The ultimate promised "seed" was the Lord Jesus, who according to the flesh was a direct descendant of Abraham.

The ultimate "Seed", through His death on the cross, made possible the ultimate "blessing" of justification by faith so that Abraham's true descendants, his spiritual descendants, could live forever in the ultimate Promised Land (heaven).

**** **God's initial promise to Abraham was that he would have physical children. According to Galatians 3:6-7, who else are Abraham's children?** *See also Galatians 3:29 and Romans 4:11-12.* Any one from any ethnic group who has the faith of Abraham is a true child of Abraham.

ESV **Galatians 3:29** . . . if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Thus, the immediate fulfillment of the promise to give Abraham descendants was found in Abraham's **physical offspring**, the Hebrew race. The ultimate physical fulfillment was the specific "seed" named **Christ (Seed Jesus)**, who was a direct physical descendant of Abraham. Through the salvation that "Seed Jesus" made possible, all who follow Abraham in faith (i.e., **true believers**) are Abraham's true offspring and are blessed with being justified through faith. The true children will live forever in the true Promised Land (a heavenly country).

******What does Romans 4:11-12 imply about physical Jews who do not have the faith of Abraham? See John 8:39.** Romans 4:12 states Abraham is actually not the father of the circumcised (Jews) who do not believe.

ESV **John 8:39-44** They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did . . . You are of your father the devil . . .

Theological Reality: Unbelieving Jews are not Abraham's true descendants.

ESV **Romans 2:28-29** . . . no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 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.

Based on Galatians 6:15-16, what is the true Israel of God? Neither being circumcised (Hebrews) nor being uncircumcised (Gentiles) counts for anything with God. What does matter is being made into a new creation in Christ. Abraham's true and promised descendants are those who have the same faith that Abraham did. The word "and" (6:16) is from *kai*, which is also the Greek word for "even". Thus Paul could have meant "even the Israel of God." If so, this means the church, the new creation, is the true Israel of God.

New Covenant theology holds that Old Testament Israel was not the church (Old Testament Israel was only a type of the church), but the church is the true Israel. This is not replacement theology; this is fulfillment theology. Genuine Israel has always and only been composed of those who had the faith of Abraham, whether Jew or Gentile.

So What?

Each of the “big three” promises of the Abrahamic covenant (land, seed, blessing) had at least two fulfillments:

- an immediate and then an ultimate,
- the physical and then the metaphysical,
- the foreshadow and then the reality,
- the type and then the fulfillment of the type,
- a temporary and then an eternal,
- an outward and then an inward,
- the sign and then the substance to which the sign pointed,
- the interim and then the permanent.

What were the immediate and ultimate fulfillments of the promises God made to Abraham (land, seed, blessing)?

- 1) Seed** ~ The immediate fulfillment of the promise to give Abraham descendants was Abraham’s physical offspring, the Hebrew race. The ultimate physical fulfillment was that particular “seed” named Jesus the Christ, who was a direct physical descendant of Abraham.
- 2) Blessing** ~ The immediate/literal blessing was material prosperity and protection from his enemies. Through the salvation that “Seed Jesus” made possible, those from all the families of the earth who follow Abraham in faith are blessed along with Abraham by being justified through faith.
- 3) Land** ~ The immediate/physical land was real estate in Canaan. The ultimate/metaphysical land is a city from heaven and a heavenly country (heaven). The true spiritual children will live forever in the True Promised Land (a heavenly country).

Pivotal Issue: What affect (if any) did the ultimate New Testament fulfillments of the promises to Abraham have on the intermediate Old Testament fulfillments? That is, once the final fulfillments came, how are we to view the initial fulfillments?
(Rhetorical questions for now; will be discussed next week).

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 60 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.

Stephen E. Atkerson
www.NTRF.org
Revised 11/23/16