

The Power of Promise

Genesis 12:1-10; 15:1-6; 17:1-19

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- The Power of Promise in Child-rearing
- The Power of Promise in motivation for life
- Review of the dispensations of Conscience and Human Government

The Power of PROMISE-- Abraham to Moses

A. The Promise to Abraham-- Genesis 12:1-3

- Genesis 12:1-3-- *"Now the LORD had said to Abram, 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"*
1. **What does God promise Abraham?**
 - a. Land
 - b. Seed or heir
 - c. Universal blessing
 2. **Is the promise conditional or unconditional?**
 - a. The formal ratification of the covenant in Genesis 15:7-17
 - Genesis 15:7-8-- *"Then He said to him, 'I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.' And he said, 'LORD God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?'"*
 - Genesis 15:9-17-- *"So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.' Then he brought all these things to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold horror and great fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in the land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nations whom they serve I will judge; afterwards they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.' And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces."*
 - b. The covenant was not bilateral, but unilateral dependent only on God for fulfillment.
 3. **Abraham's intended response: TRUST GOD**
 - a. Occupy the land
 - b. Be a channel of blessing to others

B. An Evaluation of Abraham's response to God's promises

1. **Does Abraham occupy the land? YES and NO**
 - a. **Initially, Abram obeys God and lives in the land of Canaan.**
 - Genesis 12:4-7 -- *"So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot*

his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' And there he built an altar to the LORD who had appeared to Him."

- Hebrews 11:8 -- "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going."

b. **When tested by famine, Abram fails to trust God to supply and flees to Egypt.**

- Genesis 12:10 -- "Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land."

c. **He returns to the land and does so by faith.**

- Hebrews 11:9 -- "By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise."

d. **He lived and died awaiting God to fulfill the promise of the land.**

- Hebrews 11:13-- "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

2. **Does Abraham trust God to produce an heir?**

a. **YES-- Abraham's initial faith**

- Genesis 15:1-6 -- "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' But Abram said, 'LORD God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' The LORD said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!' And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.' Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him as righteousness."

b. **NO-- Birth of Ishmael and creation of the Arab nations**

c. **YES— God renews the covenant with Abraham**

- Genesis 17:1-8 -- "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

1) **The sign of the covenant would be circumcision**

- Genesis 17:10b-11-- "Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."

2) **God promises to provide an heir through Sarah**

- Genesis 17:15-16-- "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be from her."

- Genesis 17:18-19 -- *“And Abraham said to God, ‘Oh that Ishmael might live before You!’ Then God said ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.”*
- 3) Abraham believed God.
- Romans 4:18-22-- *“contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about one hundred years old) and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*

d. **YES—When tested with the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham expressed incredible faith in the promise of God.**

- Hebrews 11:17-19 -- *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”*

3. **Is Abraham blessed by God and the channel of blessing?** YES and NO

4. **Does Abraham’s descendants respond in faith to God’s promises?** NO

- a. Isaac followed in the footsteps of his father, leaving the land for Gerar.
- b. Jacob took his entire family to Egypt
- c. Israel ended up in Egyptian slavery
- d. Even in the exodus from Egypt and journey to Canaan, they failed time after time to trust the promises of God.
- e. God’s judgment came in the form of 40 years of wandering in the wilderness until the generation who refused to trust God’s promises died off.

C. The POWER of the PROMISE Today

1. **The Promises made to Abraham are still in effect today.**

- Galatians 3:17-18 -- *“the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should be of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”*
- a. The promises were unilateral (one-sided, God-only) and unconditional (only “if” is faith)
 - b. The covenant between God and Abraham’s descendants is an everlasting covenant.

2. **God will fulfill literally and fully the promises made with Abraham and his descendants in the future millennial kingdom of Christ.**

- a. Israel will occupy ALL of the territory God gave to them.
- b. Jesus Christ will rule over the house of Jacob forever and the nation of Israel will be THE greatest nation on the face of the earth.
- c. Israel will be the channel of blessing for the rest of the world.

3. **God desires for us to trust His promises today and experience His blessing in our lives.**