

END-TIMES ISSUES

#24 Abrahamic covenant and the land of Canaan.

Different issues in the Abrahamic covenant(s).

TODAY

- ↪ The BASIS of the covenant.
- ↪ **1. LAND issues.**
- ↪ 2. OFFSPRING, "seed."
- ↪ 3. A general focus on BLESSINGS (and cursings).
- ↪ 4. A special focus on WORLDWIDE BLESSINGS. (This includes what Jesus would do.)

Then the LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:1-3 (BSB)

The Abrahamic Covenant.

★ **What does Scripture teach us about the "land" aspect of the covenant?** ★

- ↪ **God made the "land" covenant with:**
 - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- ↪ **God promised the land to:**
 - "Your seed" – Abraham: Genesis 12:7; 15:18; 24:7; Isaac: Genesis 26:4; Jacob: Genesis 48:4.
 - "You and your seed" – Abraham: Genesis 13:15; 17:8; Isaac: Genesis 26:3; Jacob: Genesis 28:13; 35:12; also 28:4 (spoken to Jacob by Isaac).
- ↪ **God said the promise would last:**
 - Forever – Abraham: Genesis 13:15; 17:8; Jacob: Genesis 48:4; perhaps implied to Isaac: "I will fulfill my promise to Abraham": Genesis 26:3.
 - No stipulations are given that could potentially put an end to the covenant.

Issues to consider:

- ↪ **The word "SEED."**
 - This word is used as *both* singular and plural. Context is needed, in order to determine which is meant (or if *both* are included). It can also be translated as "offspring" (singular or plural) or "descendant(s)."
- ↪ **How long is "forever"?**
 - The Hebrew word translated as "forever" – עולם ('ô-lām) – can refer to either the indefinite past or the indefinite future. Unless context indicates differently, *it does not imply an endpoint at some future time.*
- ↪ **Did God break his promise?**
 - God promised to give the land to *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...* not just to their seed. *Yet they didn't get the land before they died!* What is the significance of this? →

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all DIED before they received what God had promised them!

- All three died trusting God, yet without receiving what God had promised.

By faith [Abraham] dwelt in the promised land as a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

All these people **died in faith, without having received the things they were promised.**

Hebrews 11:9, 13a (BSB)

- **Did God lie or fail?** NO! *Death cannot prevent God from keeping his promises ... and God would prove himself trustworthy.*
- **They knew that God would keep his promise.** So if he didn't keep it *before* they died, there was only one conclusion to reach: They would receive it *after* they died. This is exactly what Scripture says! →

Had they wanted to, they had the opportunity to return to a place they could call "home" – the land of their ancestors.

And they acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. Now those who say such things show that they are seeking a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, **they would have had opportunity to return.**

Hebrews 11:13c-15 (BSB)

★ **But they were looking for something better – promised by God.** ★
It would be permanent, not ending at death.

However, they saw [the things they were promised] and welcomed them from afar.

... they were longing for **a better country, a heavenly one.** Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for **He has prepared a city for them.**

Hebrews 11:13b, 16 (BSB); see also 12:22.

THE "NEW JERUSALEM" IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION!

Their "seed" – the Old Testament focus is on the nation of Israel in the land of Canaan.

- ↪ God always describes the "land" covenant as being made with:
 - ⌚ Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – Exodus 6:8; 32:13; 33:1; Deuteronomy 6:10; 9:5; 1 Chronicles 16:15-17; etc.
 - ⌚ NOT the people of Israel. [It's their *ancestors'* trust, not *Israel's* trust, that forms the basis of the covenant!]
- ↪ God tells them the promise will last:
 - ⌚ Forever – Exodus 32:13; Psalm 105:8-11; 1 Chronicles 16:15-17; 2 Chronicles 20:7; etc.
- ↪ God tells them the promise is not based on their conduct:
 - ⌚ Because they are *not* righteous – Deuteronomy 9:5.
 - ⌚ In fact, they'll become so evil that they will be uprooted from the land... but when they repent, God will remember the covenant and the land – Leviticus 26:42 (and context).

In the New Testament, there is a shift in focus.
The emphasis is on the future (eternity), not the present; and it's no longer limited to the nation of Israel in the land of Canaan.

- ↪ Jesus said: **The future (eternal) kingdom is *not just for Jews* – Matthew 8:11-12; Luke 13:28-30.**
 - ⌚ Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be there; also the prophets.
 - ⌚ Gentiles: Many people from all points of the compass.
 - ⌚ Jews: Many "subjects of the kingdom" – i.e., Jews – will be cast out into the "darkness."
- ↪ Stephen said: **Abraham was promised an inheritance, but did not get it in his life – Acts 7:5.** (We also saw this in Hebrews 11:8-16.)

[God] gave [Abraham] **no inheritance here**, not even a foot of ground. But God **promised to give possession of the land to Abraham** and his descendants...

Acts 7:5a (BSB)

 - ⌚ We saw, in Hebrews 11, that Abraham's focus was directed toward an inheritance in eternity.

↪ The N.T. focus shifts from the land of Canaan to the *entire world*.

- ⌚ Who will inherit the earth?

Blessed are the meek, for they will **inherit the earth**.

Matthew 5:5 (BSB)

MEEK – also translated as "gentle."

- ⌚ Abraham... heir of the *world!*

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be **heir of the world** ...

... the promise comes by **faith**, so that it may rest on **grace** and may be **guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring**—not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the **faith** of Abraham. **He is the father of us all.**

Romans 4:13a, 16 (BSB)

- This "inheriting the world" issue occurs in the context of Jews and Gentiles trusting God. It also points to the future (what we call "eternity"). This expanded focus on the *world* is related to an expanded focus on the salvation of *people* all over the world.

How did Abraham become "father of us all"?
God considers us his children if we have the same type of faith he had.

He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." [= Genesis 17:5] He is our father in the presence of God, in whom he **believed**, the God who gives life to the **dead** and calls into being what does not yet exist.

>> [Example here (v. 18-19) – God's promise of offspring when children were no longer possible. (Abe was "as good as **dead**.")] <<

Yet he did **not waver through disbelief** in the promise of God ... [He was] **fully persuaded** that God was able to do what He had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

Now the words "it was credited to him" were written not only for Abraham, but also for us, to whom righteousness will be credited—for us who **believe** in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the **dead**.

Romans 4:16b-17, 20a, 21-24 (BSB)

>> *In other contexts: God is called our father, and Jesus our brother.* <<

This shift in focus (O.T. ⇒ N.T.) was anticipated in the O.T.

More had to happen, before the Abrahamic Covenant would be 100% fulfilled.

- ↪ Abraham's trust and obedience would ultimately lead to *worldwide* blessings. (This was reaffirmed to Isaac and Jacob.)
 - ⌚ "all peoples on earth" – Genesis 12:3 (through Abraham); Genesis 28:14 (through Jacob and his offspring); **also**: Acts 3:25 (through Abraham's offspring).
 - ⌚ "all nations" – Genesis 18:18 (through Abraham); Genesis 22:18 (through Abraham's offspring); 26:4 (through Isaac's offspring); **also**: Galatians 3:8 (through Abraham); "the nations" – Jeremiah 4:2 (after Israel repents).
 - ⌚ **NOTE**: As we look back and see how this was fulfilled, most (or all) of the passages that say "through your offspring [= seed]" find their fulfillment in one specific "Son of Abraham," Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1).

↪ There would be a change in the covenant.

- ⌚ NOT the covenant with Abraham, which contains the "land" promise... *This covenant wasn't made with Israel.*
- ⌚ BUT the covenant with Israel, which God gave them through Moses... *the covenant Israel kept breaking.*

✨ In other words, *nothing* in the Abrahamic Covenant is said to change, be nullified or cancelled, etc. ✨

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

It will **not be like the covenant I made with their fathers** when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt— **a covenant they broke**, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 31:31-32 (BSB)

- ⌚ This *new* covenant would enable the *complete* fulfillment of all parts of the Abrahamic covenant (including those only partly fulfilled in the past).

👉 The "land" issue would be expanded to include the Gentiles

- ➡ The N.T. passage that tells us "the meek will inherit the earth" is a reference to Psalm 37:11.

But the meek will **inherit the land** and delight in abundant prosperity.

Psalm 37:11 (BSB)

Blessed are the meek, for they will **inherit the earth**.

Matthew 5:5 (BSB)

- ➡ Psalm 37 was (obviously) written to Jews. But it focuses on basic principles, contrasting the righteous and the wicked. These principles are for anyone, at any time and any place. Nothing in this psalm limits it to Jews or to the land of Canaan.
- ➡ Being a basic principle, when Jesus quotes this, he emphasizes its *worldwide application*.

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- ➡ This expansion of the "land" issue would coincide with the peoples of the world turning to the true God. This also was anticipated in the Old Testament.

"**inherit the land**"
Psalm 37:11

"**inherit the earth**"
Matthew 5:5

All the ends of **the earth** will remember and turn to the LORD. All **the families of the nations** will bow down before Him. For dominion belongs to the LORD and He rules over **the nations**.

Psalm 22:27-28 (BSB)

God will bless us. All the ends of **the earth** shall fear him.

Psalm 67:7 (NHEB)

Praise the LORD, all **you nations!** Extol Him, all **you peoples!**

Psalm 117:1 (BSB)

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👉 The nations of the world will eventually come under the rule and ownership of "the Son." (This is seen in Psalm 2.)

- ➡ Though some parts of this psalm could have a *limited* fulfillment in an O.T. Davidic king, its *complete* fulfillment is *only* accomplished by Christ, the Son of God.

I will proclaim the decree spoken to Me by the LORD: "You are My Son; today I have become Your Father.

Ask Me, and **I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession.**

You will break them with an iron scepter; You will shatter them like pottery."

Psalm 2:7-9 (BSB)

[God's] Son, whom He appointed **heir of all things**, ...

Hebrews 1:2b (BSB)

- ➡ The final fulfillment of this psalm is in the book of Revelation.

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Later Scriptures do **not** nullify the "land" promise.

👉 The destruction of Israel does **not** cancel the "land" promise.

- ➡ God didn't make the promise with them, but with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and he said it was "forever"!
- ➡ Many Scripture passages tell us (prophetically) that Israel would go astray and eventually go into exile. (*Moses* even warned them it would happen.) Scripture also tells us about their return to God and restoration to the land. [All restorations that have occurred (so far) have *been limited in scope*.]
- ➡ God's willingness to restore Israel – which includes bringing them to repentance (under the New Covenant) – will be for *his* honor, not theirs (because they don't deserve it).

"You will know that I am the LORD, O people of Israel, **when I have honored my name** by treating you mercifully **in spite of your wickedness**. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

Ezekiel 20:44 (NLT); see vs. 39-44.

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👉 The New Testament emphasis on spiritual/heavenly realities is **not** a denial of physical/material realities.

- ➡ In Scripture, the words "heavenly" and "spiritual" are *not* always the opposite of "physical" or "material." [Even the resurrected body is *physical* – Luke 24:39!]
- ➡ Our future is going to be on a new (or "renewed") *physical* earth – 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1. This is the same "new earth" that is promised to Israel, in the Old Testament – Isaiah 66:22.
- ➡ The New Jerusalem is a material entity that will come down from heaven – Revelation 21:2.
- ➡ When Abraham, Isaac and Jacob looked forward to a "heavenly" country – Hebrews 11:16 – it does not mean they were looking for something "non-physical"! The issue had to do with "permanence" – something that will last *forever*.

For here we do not have a permanent city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Heb 13:14 (BSB)

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👉 The New Testament focus on the "church" does **not** mean that the promises regarding Israel and the "land" are forgotten.

- ➡ The N.T. focuses more on: ① what Christ accomplished, and ② the *Gentiles* being brought into the kingdom of God.
- ➡ The early church's Bible was what we call the "Old Testament." If anyone wanted to know Israel's future, all they needed to do was to look in their Bible! (There was no reason to repeat all these things in the N.T.)
- ➡ Once the N.T. was written, the early Christians could learn a *few* more details about Israel and the land, the main focus being on what will occur after Jesus returns. This includes the "New Jerusalem" – Revelation 21-22.
- ➡ Within this "New Jerusalem" and "end times" context are several references to *other* nations (with their rulers) being present, and serving the God of Israel – Revelation 21:23-26; 22:1-2. (This is not a new concept. The O.T. mentions similar things – Isaiah 2:2; Zechariah 8:20-22; 9:10; etc.)

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👉 It's not a matter of Christians "replacing" Israel. Rather, saved Gentiles are brought together with saved Israel.

- 👉 Gentiles were once excluded from citizenship in Israel... but in Christ, we have become fellow-citizens – Ephesians 2:11+.
- 👉 In Romans 11, we read that unsaved Jews are no longer considered to be part of Israel, and saved Gentiles are "grafted" into Israel – the "tree" who's "roots" are the patriarchs. (This is related to the New Covenant.)
- 👉 We read that the covenants belong to Israel (Romans 9:4), and we Gentiles were foreigners to them (Ephesians 2:12). But through Christ, that has changed. Under the New Covenant, Gentiles are able to enjoy the Jew's spiritual blessings – Romans 15:27!
- 👉 In Jeremiah, we read about people who claimed that Israel was no longer a nation... but God says they will once again be a people with a Davidic ruler over them – Jeremiah 33:23-26. (This hasn't happened yet.)

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SUMMARIZING THINGS...

There are differences between the O.T. and N.T. (as well as similarities). These differences involve contrasts, but not contradictions.

Old Testament	New Testament
Tells us that the Abrahamic Covenant – including the "land" issue – is "forever."	Focuses mostly on other issues; does not deny the O.T. focus.
Tells us that Israel will be destroyed... and later will be completely restored. (This has not yet happened.)	Points to the destruction and restoration of Israel... and it results in blessings for the Gentiles.
Tells us that Gentiles will be included in the blessings of Abraham.	Shows us how that has occurred (at present) and will occur (in the future).
Both Testaments contain unfulfilled prophecies; both mention Israel and other nations in end-time prophecies.	

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Observations about the "land" prophecies...

- 👉 When the focus is on the nation Israel: Passages often include the phrase "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."
- 👉 When the focus is on all nations: Passages sometimes mention Abraham, but not Isaac and Jacob.

What can we expect?

- 👉 We are told many things in both O.T. and N.T.
 - There is hope. In Christ, there is a future – for both the nation of Israel, as well as for the Gentiles.
- 👉 We are not told everything about the future.
 - We are reminded of this fact with a specific example, in Revelation 10:4.
 - If Jesus' first coming gives us any indication, we can expect that certain things will occur in ways we don't expect; and Scripture passages that might seem to contradict will come together in perfect harmony.

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Our MISSION ...

👉 *having the right response.*

- ✓ First of all, we shouldn't be so arrogant as to think we understand everything there is to know about the future. The purpose of prophecy is: (first priority) to glorify God and display his power, and (second priority) to give us hope for the future. It's not to prove our intellectual superiority!
- ✓ Finally, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we can rejoice in God, who has promised, in the Abrahamic Covenant, to bring all things to a glorious conclusion!

But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

2 Peter 3:13 (NLT)

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Credits

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