

Patriarchal Period: The Abrahamic Covenant

Belcroft Bible Church: Lesson 5



Lesson Numbers	Wednesday Night Pentateuch Lesson Titles	Class Dates
1	Pentateuch Introduction: From Paradise to the Promised Land	2/11
2	Primeval Period: Genesis 1-11 and the Noahic Covenant	2/18
3	Primeval Period: Genesis 1-11 and the Noahic Covenant	2/25
4	Patriarchal Period: Genesis 12-25	3/4
5	The Abrahamic Covenant	3/11
6	Genesis 26-50 and God's Faithfulness	3/18
7	Q & A with Pastor Matt	3/25
8	Exodus Overview	4/15
9	Leviticus Overview	4/22
10	Numbers Overview	4/29
11	Deuteronomy Overview	5/6

This class begins a *Bible Overview Series* where the elders will be systematically teaching us through the Old Testament over the next few years during the Wednesday night winter/spring semester. The goal for this semester will be to gain a clear overview of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Thus, we will seek to understand the foundational nature of the Pentateuch while also seeing the purpose, main theme, some interpretative issues along with the historical setting of each individual book. This teaching time will also seek to help you better understand the critical nature of some of the primary Biblical covenants and how they fit into God's overall plan for His people in Christ. Have you ever wondered what all those sacrifices were about and why God gave all those laws to Israel? Have you ever been perplexed by God's covenant with Abraham or wondered how God's covenant with Noah fits into God's plan for the ages? Well, it is the goal of this class to wrestle with those questions and many more as we work through the Pentateuch together!

The Importance of Biblical Covenants

The importance of rightfully seeing and understanding the major biblical covenants cannot be overstated as one of my professors, Dr. Irvin Busenitz says so clearly below... “Let no one underestimate the importance and significance of a correct understanding of the divine covenants. It is much more than an intellectual pursuit. They provide a most foundational theological anchor for understanding God’s working in human history.

1. In the Noahic Covenant, God showed His gracious mercy toward all mankind, both redeemed and unredeemed, causing it to rain on the just and the unjust and assuring the ongoing, uninterrupted cycle of seasons. In it He demonstrated His unwillingness to allow the sinfulness of man to derail His plan set forth in Genesis 3:15, His unwillingness to allow the sinfulness of man to abrogate the pre-fall command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” a command reiterated after the flood to Noah.
2. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God demonstrated His unmerited favor and unilateral choice of Israel as “the apple of His eye,” a special people called out from among the nations through whom the Messiah would come.
3. In the Priestly Covenant, God promised the perpetual priesthood of the line of Phinehas that carries all the way through to serving in the LORD’s earthly millennial temple.
4. In the Mosaic Covenant, God revealed His holiness and the heinousness of sin. The daily sacrifices provided a constant reminder of the need for the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, for the propitiating of God’s wrath.
5. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised the perpetual reign of the descendants of David, ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah and His millennial reign.
6. In the New Covenant, God evidenced anew His continual pouring out of grace, a promise through which He would put His law within His people, writing it on their hearts.

Understanding these six covenants will shape a person’s understanding of Scripture. It will reflect a hermeneutical course that will determine the pitch of one’s eschatological sails. Careful attention to these six covenants will bear an overwhelming abundance of fruitfulness.

When God enters into a unilateral covenant guaranteed only by His own faithfulness; when God enters into a covenant void of any human requirements to keep it in force; when God establishes a covenant that will continue as long as there is day and night and summer and winter, then great care must be taken not to erect man-made limitations that would bankrupt the heart and soul of these covenants and annul the glorious full realization of all that He promised through them. Their significance cannot be overestimated.”¹

¹ www.tms.edu/m/tmsj10m.pdf Irvin A. Busenitz Vice President for Academic Administration Professor of Bible

Abrahamic Covenant²

The Abrahamic Covenant: (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 18:17-19; 22:15-18; 26:2-5, 23-25; 28:10-17; 35:9-12; 50:24) [see *MSJ*³ 10:2 (Fall, 1999) 191-212; MSB, 32; ESVSB, 71, 77-78, 79-81]

A biblical covenant is a very personal and legal binding obligation, voluntarily made between two parties, in which promises are vowed and this compact can be conditional meaning bilateral or unconditional meaning unilateral. Covenants were very common in biblical times and often involved pledges or gifts, witnesses, signs, and consequences. All the biblical covenants between God and man are ultimately an act of divine grace as they are utterly undeserved and sovereignly initiated and mercifully driven by God with the five major unconditional covenants in the Bible being bound by His own character alone!

The importance of rightfully seeing and understanding the major biblical covenants cannot be overstated as one of my professors, Dr. Irvin Busenitz says so clearly below... “Let no one underestimate the importance and significance of a correct understanding of the divine covenants. It is much more than an intellectual pursuit. They provide a most foundational theological anchor for understanding God’s working in human history.

ILL: The puzzle pieces in God’s eternal plan are organized by the edges of the major biblical covenants!

The Development of the Abrahamic Covenant

- 1) The Need for the Covenant (1:1-11:26)
 - The Adamic Plan
 - The Noahic Order
 - The Abrahamic Means
- 2) The Foundation of the Covenant (12:1-3)
- 3) The Making of the Covenant (15:1-21)
- 4) The Sign of the Covenant (17:1-14)

and Old Testament *Introduction to the Biblical Covenants; The Noahic Covenant and the Priestly Covenant*

² I am indebted to my seminary notes and faithful professors whose diligent work and investment into my life serve as the foundation to all the material presented in this class. I want to publically acknowledge that these notes come from my professor Dr Michael Vlach who taught *Theology 4 Class* where he greatly helped me understand the importance of the Biblical Covenants.

³ The Master’s Seminary Journal: THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT. Keith H. Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition; <https://www.tms.edu/msj/msj10-2-2/>

- 5) The Purpose of the Covenant (Gen. 18:17-19)
- 6) The Blessing from the Covenant (22:15-18)
- 7) The Reaffirmation of the Covenant (26:2-5, 23-25; 28:10-17; 35:9-12; 50:24)

The Elements of the Abrahamic Covenant

- 1) Personal Blessing for Abraham (Gen. 12:2; cf. 24:1)
- 2) A Great Nation (Gen. 12:2; 17:4-6 [cf. 21:13, 18]; 18:18; 25:23; 35:11; 46:3; cf. 10:5, 20, 31, 32)
 - a) The Land (12:1, 7; 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 17:8; 23:1-20; 24:7; 26:3-4; 28:13; 35:12; 50:24; cf. 1:1, 2, 26, 28; 6:5, 6, 11, 13, 17; 9:1, 7, 13, 17; 10:5, 20, 31, 32; 11:1, 4, 8, 9)
 - b) A Nation through the Seed (12:2, 7; 15:5; 17:3-14; 22:16-17; 26:4, 24; 28:14; 35:11)
 - (1) Corporate (12:7; 13:15-16; 15:5, 13, 18; 17:7-10, 19; 22:17a; 26:3-4a, 24; 28:13-14a; 35:11-12)
 - (2) Individual
 - (a) Son (15:3; 21:13)
 - (b) Messiah (22:17b-18; 26:4b-5; 28:14)
- 3) Universal Blessing (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14)

Tracing the Abrahamic Covenant through Genesis

The necessity for the Abrahamic Covenant becomes abundantly clear while calculating the sinful, rebellious manifestations of the descendants of Noah which are vividly elucidated with the Tower of Babel (Gen.11:1-9). Mankind again rebelled against God's design and desire for man to populate and subdue the earth for God's glory (Gen.9:1-7). Instead, man sought to make a city and name for himself (Gen.11:1-3), lest he be "dispersed over the face of the whole earth" (Gen.11:4). The universal ramifications of the Noahic Covenant are seen in the way God judges mankind as He does not send a worldwide flood but confusion among their unified language thus provoking them to disperse and fill the earth (Gen.11:7-9). Therefore, God's desire to bless the nations of the earth and fulfill His ultimate plan will now be worked out through the special covenant made with Abram and the special nation that he would birth (Gen.12:1-3).

Furthermore, the pivotal importance and eternal consequences of the Abrahamic Covenant are elucidated as one understands the national plan and **unconditional nature** of this widespread covenant. God's specific, national plan for Abram and this covenant is seen first in His command for Abram to leave and thus separate from the rebellious nations from which he came (Gen.12:1). God's plan at this point, **contingent upon Abram's obedience**, would be to make a great nation out of him that would in turn bless the nations of the world (Gen.12:2-3). Though Abram did not have any offspring at this time, God promised to propagate this enormous nation through his very own seed (Gen.15:1-6), and it would be a nation which would possess its very own land (Gen.13:14-18; 15:18-19).

However, the nature of God's plan and thus His covenant with Abram is declared in Scripture to be unilateral as God obligates Himself to fulfill His promise, to Abram, of a great nation with a great land. This happens after Abram prepared the ritual rights of the covenant and had a deep sleep fall upon him, so that, only God is the one bound by this contract because only He passes through the ceremony (Gen.15:7-21). Therefore, the ultimate fulfillment of this covenant is totally contingent upon the character of God not the obedience of the nation.

Finally, while tracing the development of the Abrahamic Covenant one must further grapple with provisions of this covenant because as of Genesis chapter sixteen Abram still has no personal heir. Yet, by chapter seventeen God begins to personally manifest for Abram some of the blessings and provisions of the covenant. First, God changes Abram's name to Abraham, "father of many nations" as it reflects the reality of God's promise that Abram would be the father of many nations (Gen.17:3-6). Then, God further delineates the nature of the covenant by explaining how God has established it with Abraham and his offspring as an everlasting covenant which means that the land they will receive will be an everlasting possession (Gen.17:8).

Another provision of this covenant is the sign of circumcision (Gen.17:10-11) which, among other things, was a physical reminder to Abraham and his offspring of their required obedience to the covenant (Gen.17:12-13). However, their disobedience to God's requirement would be complete alienation and separation from God and the people (vs.14). Yet their personal disobedience to the covenant would not disintegrate what is an everlasting and unconditional covenant, but it would destroy their enjoyment of this special covenantal relationship.

The last and personal provision given to Abraham is seen when God explains to him how Sarah, in her old age, would actually bare his son who is to be called Isaac and who will also be a perpetuation of this covenant (Gen.17:15-21). As Abraham is circumcised (Gen.17:22-27) the development of the covenant is complete, but God will continue to reiterate His everlasting promise to Abraham (Gen.18; 22) and later to Abraham's offspring (Gen.26; 28; 35; 50).

The critical importance of the biblical covenants is not only seen in tracing their development but also in contemplating their interconnectedness and dependence on one another. All of the major covenants, in some way, build upon those previously given and further clarify how God is sovereignly orchestrating His plan of redemption which will ultimately fulfill His major plan of divine glorification. The Noahic and the Abrahamic Covenants display this correlating reality as God begins to unveil His purpose for the nations (Noahic) through establishing His plan with a specific nation (Abrahamic). This pattern of God delineating His requirements and provisions

through a covenant continues to unfold in Scripture through progressive revelation and the establishment of the Mosaic, Priestly, Davidic, and New Covenants. Yet all of these theological and eternally impacting covenants find their foundation being laid in the book of Genesis through the roots of the Noahic and Abrahamic Covenants.

I. Importance

A. A proper understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant (AC) is crucial for understanding God's plans for the ages. "The gracious promises given to Abraham in covenant appear throughout Scripture as the foundation and essential ingredients in germinal form of all subsequent salvation history" (Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 40-41).

John Wolvard says, "It is recognized by all serious students of the Bible that the covenant with Abraham is one of the important and determinative revelations of Scripture. It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament and reaches for its fulfillment into the New. In the controversy between premillenarians and amillenarians, the interpretation of this covenant more or less settles the entire argument. The analysis of its provisions and the character of their fulfillment set the mold for the entire body of Scriptural truth." *The Millennial Kingdom*, 139.

B. The Abrahamic Covenant is referred to many times in both the OT and the NT.

C. "The Abrahamic covenant. . . must be considered as the basis of the entire covenant program" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 70).

II. Provisions of the AC

A. Genesis 12:1-3

1. A great nation will come from Abraham (v.2)
2. Abraham will be blessed (v.2)
3. Abraham's name will be great (v.2)
4. Abraham will be a blessing (v.2)
5. God will bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham (v.3)
6. In Abraham and his descendants all the families of the earth will be blessed (v.3)

B. Genesis 12:6-7 Land is promised to the descendants of Abraham

C. Genesis 13:14-17 The land is promised to Abraham and his descendants “forever.” No conditions are given for this promise.

D. Genesis 15:1-21

1. God will protect Abraham and reward him (v.1).
2. Abraham’s descendants will be as numerous as the stars (v.5).
3. The specifics of the land dimensions are given (vv. 18-21)

E. Genesis 17:1-14

1. God will multiply Abraham’s descendants (v.2)
2. Abraham will be a father of many nations (v.5)
3. Kings will come from Abraham (v. 6)
4. This covenant is viewed as “everlasting” (v.7)
5. All the land of Canaan is promised to Abraham (v.8)
6. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant (vv.10-14)

F. Genesis 22:15-18

1. Abraham’s descendants will be innumerable (v.17).
2. The nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham’s seed (v.18).

G. Summary of promises of AC

1. Individual promises to Abraham
2. National promises to Abraham’s descendants—Israel
3. Universal promises to the nations. NOTE: From the very beginning God predicted that Gentiles would eventually be included in the blessings of the AC.
4. “While these particulars are analyzed it will be seen that certain *individual* promises were given to Abraham, certain *national* promises respecting the nation Israel, of which he was the father, were given to him, and certain *universal* blessings that encompassed all nations were given to him” (Pentecost, *Things to come*, 72).

5. “In the development of this covenant it is of utmost importance to keep the different areas in which a promise was made clearly in mind, for if the things covenanted in one area are transferred to another area only confusion will result in the subsequent interpretation. Personal promises may not be transferred to the nation and promises to Israel may not be transferred to the Gentiles” (Pentecost, 73).

III. Character of the AC

⁴Dr Keith Essex explains...During the last century, the most discussed issue concerning the Abrahamic Covenant has been its nature. Paul N. Benware introduces this topic with the following words:

“Probably the most significant issue related to the Abrahamic covenant has to do with its nature. Is it a conditional (bilateral) covenant or an unconditional (unilateral) covenant? How one answers that question determines the framework of one’s prophetic studies.”

A consensus is growing that the promises the LORD bound Himself to fulfill in the Abrahamic Covenant are unconditional, but the timing of and participants in that fulfillment are conditioned by faith-produced human obedience. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. writes,

“In our judgment, the conditionality was not attached to the promise but only to the participants who would benefit from these abiding promises. . . . The duty of obedience (law, if you wish) was intimately tied up with promise as a desired sequel.”

This viewpoint accords with all the biblical data.

A. The AC is an unconditional covenant. Thus, its ultimate fulfillment is based on God and not on the actions of humans.

1. The covenant is made with no conditions given. “. . . this covenant is depicted simply as a binding promise—or, better, a promissory oath—on the part of God. No particular conditions are attached to it. . . . The patriarchal covenant thus rests in God’s unconditional promises for the future, and it asks of the recipient only that he trust” (John Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, 25-26).

2. The AC was solemnized by the unilateral act of God passing through the animal pieces (Gen. 15:7-21). Abraham did not pass through the pieces. This shows that God, not Abraham, is the One responsible for the ultimate fulfillment of the AC.

⁴ The Master’s Seminary Journal: THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT. Keith H. Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition; <https://www.tms.edu/msj/msj10-2-2/>

3. The fact that the AC is an eternal and everlasting covenant infers that the AC is an unconditional covenant.

4. Later confirmations of the covenant are given in the midst of apostasy (see Jer. 31:36). Thus, disobedience does not nullify the eventual fulfillment of the covenant.

5. The New Testament declares that the AC is immutable (Heb. 6:13-18 with Gen. 15:8-21).

6. NOTE: The unconditional nature of the AC means that God will bring the fulfillment of the covenant. This does not mean that every person or generation will experience the benefits of this covenant since a person or group's relationship to the covenant is based on faith. Thus, there can be a conditional element to an unconditional element. God will fulfill the AC, but one's connection with the blessings of the AC is based on faith. As Pentecost states, "Again, it is important to observe that an unconditional covenant, which renders a covenanted program certain, may have conditional blessings attached. The program will be carried to fulfillment, but the individual receives the blessings of that program only by conforming to the conditions on which the blessings depend" (Pentecost, 79).

7. IMPLICATIONS: "If it is an unconditional covenant, these events in Israel's national life are inevitable" (Pentecost, 73).

B. Eternal covenant

1. Genesis 13:15
2. Genesis 17:7-8, 19
3. Genesis 48:4

IV. The AC and Seed, Land, and Blessing

A. Seed (descendants)

1. "Seed" is a major aspect of the AC (Gen. 12:7).
2. The "seed" would become innumerable (Gen. 13:16).
3. The seed begins to take form through the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.
4. "The New Testament discloses that this great 'seed' ultimately includes all those who follow Abraham's pattern of faith that justifies, whether Jew or Gentile (cf. Ro 4:10-12)" But, "Including Gentiles among Abraham's descendants

through Christ, however, does not preclude the literal, physical dimension clearly evident in the promise” (Saucy, TCFPD, 43).

5. “We should note also that the term *seed* carried with it a certain ‘doctrinal intention’ that linked it with the original promise of a victorious ‘seed’ for all mankind (Ge 3:15). The promise of a seed to Abraham was a continuation of this original promise. As a collective singular noun, *seed* can refer both to one person and to numerous, related family descendants, implying a corporate solidarity between the one and the many. This double sense is evident in the term ‘seed of the woman,’ which moves from the collective many to the singular ‘he’ (Ge 3:15). Thus it is with the seed of Abraham. The expression refers to the one, Christ (Gal 3:16), and the many in union with him (Gal 3:29)” (Saucy, 44).

B. Land

1. Land is a major aspect of the AC (Gen. 12:7)
2. “Because the concept of ‘nation’ carries a territorial aspect, the land must be viewed as the necessary corollary to the promised seed that would constitute the ‘great nation’” (Saucy, 44). Thus, the people and the land belong together.
3. The land was promised as an everlasting possession for Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:8; cf. 13:15). “These statements demonstrate that the land promise cannot be singled out from the other aspects of the Abrahamic promise as only temporary or a type of something ‘spiritual’ or ‘heavenly’” (Saucy, 45).

C. Blessing

1. “The construction of the Hebrew text of Genesis 12:2-3 reveals that the ultimate purpose was to bless all the peoples of the earth” (Saucy, TCFPD, 42).
2. “It is agreed that the principal statement of these three verses is contained in the final clause of v. 3. The Hebrew syntax indicates this, and the clause is most probably to be taken as a result clause indicating what will be the consummation of the promises that the preceding verses have announced. That is to say, the personal promises given to Abraham have final world blessings as their aim” (William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 65).
3. Thus, Abraham and the people of Israel were intended from the beginning to be the channel in which blessings would be brought to the peoples of the world.

V. The AC in the OT

A. The establishment of the nation of Israel was a continuation of God’s plan to bring blessing and service to the nations (Ex. 19:5-6). The Davidic and New Covenants would also bring further substance to the promise (Saucy, 46).

B. Israel's continued existence, even in times of serious disobedience, was sustained by the AC.

1. When the people made the golden calf Moses interceded for them by appealing to the AC (Ex. 32:13; cf. Deut. 9:27-28).
2. Lev. 26:42-44; Deut. 29:13; 2 Kings 13:22-23
3. The prophets' message of judgment was still in light of God's promises to Abraham (Isa. 29:22-24; 41:8-10; **Jer. 33:1-26** see also the clear promises to fulfill the Davidic and Priestly covenants as well).
4. Jer. 30:3

C. "So Old Testament history closed with the promise to Abraham very much alive in the message of the prophets and the faith of Israel. The original elements of the promise—namely, a seed, or descendants who constitute a special people distinct from the other nations, and a land—remained firmly in place" (Saucy, 48).

D. Does Joshua 21:43-45 teach the full fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant? "So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. ⁴⁴ And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. ⁴⁵ Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass."

"Some theologians have insisted that the statement in Joshua 21:43 means that the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled then. But this cannot be true because later the Bible gives additional predictions about Israel's possessing the land after the time of Joshua (e.g., **Amos 9:14-15**). Joshua 21:43, therefore, refers to the extent of the land as outlined in Numbers 34 and not to the ultimate extent as it will be in the messianic kingdom (Gen. 15:18-21). Also though Israel possessed the land at this time it was later dispossessed, whereas the Abrahamic Covenant promised Israel that she would possess the land forever (Gen. 17:8)" (Donald K. Campbell, "Joshua," *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, vol. 1, 364-65).

VI. The AC in the NT

A. As the NT era opens the coming of Jesus is linked to the AC

1. Luke 1:54-55 "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his offspring forever."
2. Luke 1:72-73 "To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father."

B. Seed

1. The promise of the AC continues in relation to the people of Israel but is expanded to all those who are in Christ.
2. “The Jew according to the flesh is still recognized as the descendant of Abraham despite his spiritual status (Lk 13:16; 16:24; 19:9; Jn 8:37; Ac 13:26; Ro 11:1)” (Saucy, 49).
3. “However, the emphasis is now on the seed that actually inherits the promise, namely those who follow after the pattern of Abraham’s faith” (Saucy, 49).
4. The fulfillment of the promise is found in the coming of “the seed”—Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16).
5. Abraham and his descendants were to be the mediators of the promise, and now the climax of this goal is reached in Christ. Now, those who believe in the manner of Abraham are “Abraham’s seed” (see Gal. 3:26-29).
6. We should not conclude that since believing Gentiles are now part of Abraham’s seed that there is no future for national Israel or that believing Gentiles now comprise a new spiritual Israel.
 - a) “If Abraham were merely the father of Israel, we would have to conclude that the Gentiles who are now a part of this seed are therefore a part of Israel. But according to the New Testament, Abraham is more than that; he is portrayed as the father of both the people of Israel and of the Gentiles. On the grounds that Abraham was a believer before he was circumcised—that is, before he was recognized as a Hebrew—the Apostle Paul declared him to be “the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised . . . and . . . also the father of the circumcised” (Ro 4:9–12; cf. v. 16)” (Saucy, 50).
 - b) Rom 4:11-12, Moo states: “because Abraham believed while uncircumcised, he is the father of all Gentile believers; because he believed and was *also* circumcised, he is qualified to be the father of all Jewish believers. . . . Paul now claims Abraham and the inheritance that is his (cf. vv. 16-17), for anyone who believes. It is through faith, and not through incorporation into the nation of Israel, that one becomes Abraham’s spiritual ‘child’” (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 269-70).
 - c) “The fact that the true seed of Abraham includes both Jews and Gentiles does not rule out a continuing distinction for Israel in the New Testament. Nor should the calling of the Gentiles as the seed of Abraham

be construed as the formation of a ‘new spiritual Israel’ that supersedes the Old Testament nation of Israel” (Saucy, 50).

d) [T]he fact that the New Testament teaching of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the seed of Abraham is never related to the fulfillment of the promise of a ‘great nation’ (Ge 12:2). Rather, it is always tied to the promise of universal blessing to all the nations (Gal 3:7-9). Thus the promises concerning the physical seed constituting the nation of Israel remain alongside this universal promise even as they did in the original statement in the Old Testament” (Saucy, 50).

e) The concept of “seed of Abraham” is used in several different ways in the New Testament. Fruchtenbaum, for example, lists four senses of “seed of Abraham.” First, he says it can refer to those who are biological descendants of Abraham. Second, it can refer to the Messiah, who is the unique individual seed of Abraham. Third, Fruchtenbaum says it can refer to the righteous remnant of Israel (cf. Isa 41:8 with Rom 9:6). Fourth, it can be used in a spiritual sense for believing Jews and Gentiles (Gal 3:29) (see Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 702).

It is in this last sense—the spiritual sense—that believing Gentiles are the seed of Abraham. John Feinberg distinguishes between a physical sense and a spiritual sense of being a seed of Abraham. According to him, nonsupersessionists hold that “no sense (spiritual especially) is more important than any other, and that no sense cancels out the meaning and implications of the other senses” (John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” 73). Thus, the application of the titles “sons of Abraham” or “seed of Abraham” to believing Gentiles does not mean that believing Gentiles are spiritual Jews or part of Israel.

C. Land

1. There is little discussion in the NT concerning the land promise of the AC but this does not mean there are not any implications in the NT concerning the land.
2. Since the land is connected with the nation Israel any reference to God’s concern for the nation must include implications for the land.
 - a) Luke 1:32-33 “and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, his kingdom will never end.”
 - b) Luke 1:71-74 There would be “salvation from our enemies” and “rescue” from their hands.
 - c) Luke 2:32—Christ would be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel (Lk 2:32).

3. Kingdom “The theme of ‘kingdom’ is crucial for our consideration. It clearly includes among its nuances the idea of historical, political, physical realm, that is, land. It may and surely does mean more than that, but it is never so spiritualized that those elemental nuances are denied or overcome” (Walter Brueggemann, *The Land*, 171).

D. Universal blessing (Gal. 3:8) Blessings are promised to all through faith in Christ.

The Ultimate Restoration of Israel⁵

1. Isa 27; 42-44; 65; 66
2. Jer 30-33
3. Ezek 36; 37; 40-48
4. Dan 9:20-27; 12:1-3
5. Hosea 2:14-23; 14:4-7
6. Joel 3:18-21
7. Amos 9:11-15
8. Obad 17,21
9. Micah 7:14-20
10. Zeph 3:14-20
11. Hag 2:20-23
12. Zech 13;14
13. Mal 4:1-3

⁵ The MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV) Thomas Nelson, 1997; Pg.1287.

THE FIVE COVENANTS OF SCRIPTURE

A Divine Biblical Covenant is a promise from God, formalised in a legal framework, solemnised by sacrifice and guaranteed by oath.

The five Covenants are stepping stones through time as God brings history to a climax in the Millennium in the restoration of all things that were lost through man's sin in Eden's garden.

(The word "Unconditional" below refers to the promise within the Covenant, not necessarily the individual enjoyment of its blessing)

The COVENANTS	Refs	Type	Duration	Sign Symbol	Sacrifice	Timing	Beneficiary	Purpose
Noahic 2,348 BC	Genesis 6:18 8:20-22 9:8-18	Royal grant One-way Unilateral Unconditional	Everlasting	Rainbow (Gen 9:13-17)	Genesis 8:20-22	Inaugurated just after the cataclysmic worldwide destruction of the flood.	Made with Noah and his seed (with all of humanity and the animal kingdom).	To secure the earth as a STAGE for the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21) when all will be administered by Christ in Millennial Kingdom (Eph 1:10-11).
Abrahamic 1,913 BC	Genesis 12:1-3 15:13-18 17:9-11, 19 22:15-18	Royal grant One-way Unilateral Unconditional	Everlasting	Circumcision (Gen 17:11)	Genesis 15:8-21	Inaugurated just after the disaster of Nimrod's rebellion, the sin of "the sons of God" and the Tower of Babel.	Made with Abraham and His seed (Israel). Its spiritual blessings are enjoyed by believers now by faith.	To secure an innumerable SEED to enjoy the land and blessing (and the world through them). Not yet fulfilled but will come to pass in the Millennial Kingdom at Christ's second coming (Luke 1:71-75, Rom 4:13)
Mosaic - Old - Sinaitic 1,491 BC	Exodus 19:5-8 24:3-8 31:13-17	Suzerain Two-way Bilateral Conditional	Temporary (BC 1,500 to AD 32). Renewed 7x (eg. "Land Covenant" of Deut 29)	The Sabbath (Exod 31:13)	Exodus 24:4-8	Brought in just after the dramatic birth of Israel as they left Egypt. Abolished in the death of Christ (Heb 7:12-18, 8:13, 10:13)	Made with Israel. On stone. No connection with the church.	Added as a temporary supervisor to teach righteous STANDARDS and magnify sin until Christ came (Gal 3:22-26). No longer in force (2 Cor 3:9-11).
Davidic 1,042 BC	2 Samuel 7:11-16 Psalm 89:3-37	Royal grant One-way Unilateral Unconditional	Everlasting	Christ's resurrection and enthronement (Acts 2:30-33)	2 Samuel 6:17-18	Inaugurated between the past chaos of the "Judges period" and the future apostasy of Israel and Judah in the post-Solomon era of a divided Kingdom of Israel.	Made with King David and his Royal seed.	Secures a son of David as SOVEREIGN , to sit on a throne and reign for ever (Luke 1:32). Currently "dormant" but remains in place to be taken up when the Son of David (Christ) ascends David's throne in the Millennium.
Messianic - New - Second - Better - Everlasting 33 AD	Isa 59:20-21 Jer 31:31-34 Eze 36:24-31 37:26-38 Heb 8:8-12 10:15-18	Royal grant, One-way Unilateral Unconditional	Everlasting	Bread and cup (Matt 26:28, 1 Cor 11:25)	Hebrews 10:8-25, 29 13:24, 13:20	Announced in 606BC at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Then Inaugurated on the darkest day in human history, the day when the Lord Jesus was crucified.	Enjoyed by believers spiritually now. To be nationally enjoyed by ethnic converted Israel at Christ's return, both spiritually and physically (Jer 31:31-34, Eze 36:24-31, 37:14-28, 39:25-29).	Replaces Old Covenant (Jer 31:31, Heb 7:18-19, 8:13). Secures SALVATION , a new heart and forgiveness for all of God's people (Heb 8:10-11). Includes a return to the land and peace for future converted Israel, ensuring they never again lose it through disobedience.

The above Covenant programme contains "Biblical covenants" only. It is not to be confused with what is popularly known as "Covenant Theology", which is a framework constructed by Reformed theologians in the 16th and 17th Centuries. "Covenant Theology" posits three "theological covenants", namely the "Covenant of Redemption" (made between the Father and the Son before creation), the "Covenant of Works" (made with Adam in the Garden of Eden) and the Covenant of Grace (promised in Gen 3:15 just after the fall), none of which are actually called 'covenants' in the Bible. Furthermore, Covenant Theology does not distinguish between Israel and the Church, nor does it see a literal 1,000 year future Kingdom on earth. For these reasons, Covenant Theology is seen to present an inadequate framework for understanding the true Biblical "covenant programme".

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