

HOCL

Rob Smith – Guest Speaker

October 12, 2014

Covenant - Abraham

Review

We have been in a series over the last few weeks where we have been looking at the Covenants that God has made with his people throughout History.

The covenant we are looking at today is the Covenant God made with Abraham and it is an Unconditional Covenant. And in order for us to understand these unconditional covenants, we need to know a few things about them:

1. They are literal covenants and their contents must be interpreted literally as well. There is always a lot of debate about how we should interpret the Bible, but what we will find is that all of these covenants are detailed and specific, and do not need any other interpretation in addition to what they state.
2. the covenants that God has made with Israel are eternal and are not in any way restricted or altered by time. A covenant can be signed, sealed, and made for a specific time in history, but it does not mean that all the provisions go immediately into effect. In fact, three different things happen once a covenant is sealed: **Some of the provisions go into effect right away; Some provisions go into effect in the near future, which may be twenty five years away or five hundred years away; and some provisions go into effect only in the distant prophetic future, not having been fulfilled even to this day.**
3. It's necessary to re-emphasize that these unconditional covenants were not retracted because of Israel's disobedience; These are unconditional covenants because they are totally dependent upon God for fulfillment, and their ultimate fulfillment can be expected.
4. **And then the Fourth thing that we should point out here is this:** these covenants were made with a specific people: Israel, and can be clarified by Paul in Romans 9:4, and again in Ephesians 2:11-12:

The actual Abrahamic Covenant is found in [Genesis 12:1-3](#). The ceremony of that covenant is recorded in Genesis 15.

So turn with me if you would to Genesis 12:1-3 and this will be our text today. If you would like to read Genesis 15 later, it would be good to see this entire covenant unfold.

Read Genesis 12:1-3

So this morning I want us to take a look at the three main features to the Abrahamic Covenant:

1. The promise of land ~ [Genesis 12:1](#) says again, “The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you” And God called Abraham out from Ur of the Chaldees to a land that He would give him. And we know that the Land was the Promised land. Now it’s important to take a note here in order to mention this..... In Genesis 11, it tells us that Abram was already on his way to the promised land, but for some reason he was stopped. ³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there. ³² Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.”

There’s an important life lesson here for each of us today! If God is calling you to go somewhere, make sure you don’t stop before you get there and just settle. For whatever reason, Abram’s father, Terah, decided to stop in Haran and he died where he settled!! God doesn’t want us to settle!! Settling is not good for our own lives and settling is not good for those who are coming behind us! Let’s think about this as a church for a minute....we want to make sure that we don’t just settle into a place where we are comfortable!! If we’re going to move into all that God has in store for us, we have to keep going!!

Now, This promise is reiterated in [Genesis 13:14–18](#) where it says, “The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring^[a] forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” And its dimensions are given in [Genesis 15:18–21](#) and it’s also expanded in [Deuteronomy 29 & 30:1–10](#), which is the [Palestinian Covenant](#). And it’s this Palestinian Covenant that has created so much turmoil for centuries, including right up to today!!! God made this covenant with Israel after the Mosaic Covenant and after Israel had wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Besides the promises that God would bless them if they obeyed His commandments and curse them if they disobeyed, the Palestinian Covenant also contains some special promises to Israel that many believe will not be completely fulfilled until the millennial reign of Christ. First, God promised to gather the scattered Israelites from all over the world and to bring them back into the land He had promised to their ancestors ([Deuteronomy 30:3-5](#)). Second, God promised to regenerate the Israelites of that time and their descendants by circumcising their hearts so that they would love Him totally ([Deuteronomy 30:6](#)). Third, God promised to judge Israel’s enemies ([Deuteronomy 30:7](#)), and, fourth, He promised that the Israelites would obey God and that God would prosper them in their obedience ([Deuteronomy 30:8-9](#)). And it’s these things here that are significant for us when we talk about some of the future fulfillment of this Covenant at the end of my message

today.

Ok, the 2nd feature of this covenant is

2. The promise of descendants [Genesis 12:2](#) says, “ “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” God promised Abraham that He would make a great nation out of him. And sure enough, Abraham did have children and became the father to many sons!!! “Father Abraham, had many sons, many sons had father abraham.....I am one of them and so are you, so let’s just praise the Lord!!” Well, we are all descendants from Abraham!

But you know, there are times in our lives, Even when God promises blessings, when we sometimes think he is a liar. We tend to plot and scheme because we don’t think we can trust him. And verse 3 here tells us that Abram made a plan to make sure he had an heir “ And Abram said to God, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

Now let me ask a few questions this morning.

Would you like God to bless you?

Do you really believe God could bless you if you would obey him?

Do you think anything you could plan could be greater than what an almighty God could do?

Friends listen.....When we are dealing with God’s blessings, His blessings are always far beyond what we could ever imagine. Abram was looking for a son; but God was planning a nation, immense and numberless. Verse 4&5 says “⁴Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring^[d] be.”

What God promises Abram is beyond belief. Heirs like the stars of the heaven. On a rainy, cloudy night, you might be able to count both of them. But on a clear night out in the country, you realize they are numberless.

In a similar passage in Genesis 22:17, God says his seed will be as the sands of the seashore. Think with me now. Let’s say you’re Abram. Both you and your wife are older and your wife is barren. Never had any kids. God tells you to look up at the millions of stars. And this is supposed to be how many descendants you will have. It’s enough to make you laugh. In fact, if we looked in Genesis 18, we find that Abram’s wife Sarai did laugh. But not Abram. In chapter

15:6 it tells us that Abram believed and because of that belief, it was credited to him as righteousness!

Friends, belief is the first step of obedience. Are we willing to believe that what God says is true and right? Do we obey God because we believe he is true, or because of a ritual our parents passed on to us. Do we believe God is right when he tells us to be holy, or do we think he just wants to keep us from having fun!

Our belief will move us to action!!

The 3rd feature of this covenant is....

3. The promise of blessing and redemption Genesis 12:3 says “ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth, will be blessed through you”. God promised to bless Abraham and the families of the earth through him. This promise is amplified in the New Covenant (that we’ll be taking a look at on February 23 and it has to do with “Israel’s spiritual blessing and redemption.”

The unconditional and eternal nature of the abramaic covenant is seen in that the covenant is reaffirmed to Isaac ([Genesis 21:12](#); [26:3–4](#)). The “I will” promises suggest the unconditional aspect of the covenant. The covenant is further confirmed to Jacob ([Genesis 28:14–15](#)). It is noteworthy that God reaffirmed these promises amid the sins of the patriarchs, which further emphasizes the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

And then the “new covenant” aspect is spoken about first in the book of Jeremiah. The old covenant that God had established with His people required obedience to the Old Testament Mosaic law. And because the wages of sin is death ([Romans 6:23](#)), the law required that people perform rituals and sacrifices in order to please God and remain in His grace. But the prophet Jeremiah predicted that there would be a time when God would make a new covenant with the nation of Israel and offer another way for the redemption of sin.

“The day will come,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. . . . And this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,’ says the Lord. ‘I will put my law in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people’” No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” ([Jeremiah 31:31](#), [33-34](#)).

Now, God's method of fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant is literal. God partially fulfilled the covenant in history: God blessed Abraham by giving him the land ([Genesis 13:14–17](#)); God blessed him spiritually ([Genesis 13:8, 18; 14:22, 23; 21:22](#)); God gave him numerous descendants ([Genesis 22:17; 49:3–28](#)). The important element of the Abrahamic Covenant, however, demands a future fulfillment with The Messiah's kingdom rule:

So let me just share 3 quick thoughts with you about this future fulfillment:

(1) Israel as a nation will possess the land in the future. Numerous Old Testament passages anticipate the future blessing of Israel and her possession of the land as promised to Abraham. Ezekiel envisions a future day when Israel is restored to the land as well. ([Ezekiel 20:33–37, 40–42; 36:1–37:28](#)). So for us, any of the promised land that is now in other hands OR is not under full control of Israel, will one day be possessed by Israel before Christ comes back! When we see the news of the fighting between the Palestinians and Israel, they're fighting over this land!!! And for you and I as Christians, we are to stand for Israel!! Israel is God's chosen people and his chosen Nation!! And if you go online for just a few minutes, you will find articles from all over the world that speak about the orthodox Jewish growth that is happening right now in Israel!

(2) Israel as a nation will be converted, forgiven, and restored ([Romans 11:25–27](#)). "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,²⁶ and in this way^[a] all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

"The deliverer will come from Zion;
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

²⁷ And this is^[b] my covenant with them
when I take away their sins."

In leading toward the return of Christ, these things will need to happen and many Jews will come to know Christ as the Messiah!!! Here in the US, there are about 7 million Jews and of that group, it is estimated that 1.7 of them are Messianic Jews and the number is growing steadily!

Now, the 3rd thought is this....

(3) Israel will repent and receive the forgiveness of God in the future ([Zechariah 12:10–14](#)).

The Abrahamic Covenant finds its ultimate fulfillment in connection with the return of Messiah to rescue and bless His people Israel. It is through the nation of Israel that God promised in

[Genesis 12:1–3](#) to bless the nations of the world. That ultimate blessing will usher in the forgiveness of sins and the Messiah's glorious kingdom reign on earth.

So what do we do with this 3rd part of the Abrahamic Covenant? How can we apply it to our lives? It's pretty simple, really. We just need to know that God wants to bless us, and within that blessing, He has provided a way of redemption for us! To be redeemed means that our sins have been transferred to Christ when He was on the Cross...dying for those sins!!

And what we will see throughout all of these "Covenants" is the story of love, of grace, of mercy, and ultimately of the sacrifice that God made to send his only son to this earth so that you and I would have the opportunity to live eternally with Him!!!

I'm not sure where you are at today in your relationship with Christ, but today could easily be the day when you made a decision to follow Him. I'm going to pray for us before we leave and if you would like to make a commitment to Christ today, I'll just ask you to raise your hand so I can see it and I'll have a special prayer for you.

Prayer