

CONCERNING THE WAY

April 29, 2008



Introduction - Abraham Part 2 - The Abrahamic Covenant

We're going to concentrate this lesson on the covenant God made with Abraham. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this covenant to understanding the Bible and the plan of God. If you understand this covenant, you will understand not only past history, but what is going on in the Mideast today, and you will understand what will happen in the future. Intrigued? Here we go...

- Dusty Rhodes

The ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Dr. Mal Couch states:

The Bible really begins the unfolding of the central plan in Genesis 12 with the key figure, Abraham. The contract, covenant or agreement God makes with him, *forms the backbone of the rest of Scripture*. This Abrahamic Contract unrolls or unfolds all the way through Revelation. *By understanding this agreement and its basic tenets, we can understand the rest of the Bible—the parts as well as the whole.*

- Basic scriptures

Genesis 12:1-3 *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father's household to the land that I will show you. (2) Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. (3) I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name."*

Genesis 13:14-17 *After Lot had departed, the LORD said to Abram, "Look from the place where you stand to the north, south, east, and west. (15) **I will give all the land that you see to you and your descendants forever.** (16) And I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone is able to count the dust of the earth, then your descendants also can be counted. (17) Get up and walk throughout the land, for I will give it to you."*

Genesis 15:1-21 *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who will reward you in great abundance." (2) But Abram said, "O sovereign LORD, what will you give me since I continue to be childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus?" (3) Abram added, "Since you have not given me a descendant, then look, one born in my house will be my heir!" (4) But look, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but instead a son who comes from your own body will be your heir." (5) The LORD took him outside and said, "Gaze into the sky and count the stars -- if you are able to count them!" Then he said to him, "So will your descendants be." (6) **Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD considered his response of faith as proof of genuine loyalty.** (7) The LORD said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." (8) But Abram said, "O sovereign LORD, by what can I know that I am to possess it?" (9) The LORD said to him, "Take for me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." (10) So Abram took all these for him and then cut them in two and placed each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds in half. (11) When birds of prey came*

down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. (12) When the sun went down, Abram fell sound asleep, and great terror overwhelmed him. (13) Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country. They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. (14) But I will execute judgment on the nation that they will serve. Afterward they will come out with many possessions. (15) But as for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. (16) In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit." (17) When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking firepot with a flaming torch passed between the animal parts. (18) That day the LORD made a covenant with Abram: "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River (19) the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, (20) Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, (21) Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

Notice that verse 6 is just before the two parties enter into the contract. This is no accident. God would not have entered into a contract with a non-believer, an unrighteous man. The reason this contract could be completed with Abraham is because He believed God. Remember this context when you see this verse quoted in the New Testament. Verse 6 is a piece of the gospel, and a picture of what a believer looked like then. They didn't know about the details of Jesus Christ, the cross, etc., but they knew there was a promised seed that would come to redeem the world. They trusted that God would work all that out, they looked forward to him.

The Founding Sacrifice of the Abrahamic Covenant. Just as the Noahic covenant was founded with a sacrifice, so also the Abrahamic. A holy God and sinful men can meet only upon the ground of blood atonement. In Genesis 15:17 animals' lives had to be taken in order to consummate the agreement.

What is this all about, this cutting animals in two stuff?

- This was a common way of making a serious agreement or contract in the ancient world (see Jeremiah 34:18-20 for another instance of this - hundreds of years later it was still used)
 - The smoking firepot and torch were symbols of an oath of cursing in the ancient world. God is trying to tell Abraham (and all of us up to today) that:
 - May He be accursed if He does not fulfill this contract
 - May He be torn apart like these animals if He does not fulfill this contract
 - This is only a threat to God, because He's the only one who walked between the animal pieces - God had put Abraham to sleep, to show that He was doing this, not man
 - Prophetic implication of this - who was made a curse for us? Jesus Christ.
- Wow, isn't this amazing? God is telling us in the strongest terms possible that nothing will stop Him from completing this contract.

Genesis 17:1-21 *When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the sovereign God. Walk before me and be blameless. (2) Then I will confirm my covenant between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants." (3) Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God said to him, (4) "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations. (5) No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. (6) I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you. (7) I will confirm my covenant as a perpetual covenant between me and you. It will extend to your descendants after you throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you. (8) **I will give the whole land of Canaan -- the land where you are now residing -- to you and your descendants after you as a permanent possession. I will be their God.**" (9) Then God said to Abraham, "As*

*for you, you must keep the covenantal requirement I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. (10) This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be circumcised. (11) You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins. This will be a reminder of the covenant between me and you. (12) Throughout your generations every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not one of your descendants. (13) They must indeed be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money. The sign of my covenant will be visible in your flesh as a permanent reminder. (14) Any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin will be cut off from his people -- he has failed to carry out my requirement." (15) Then God said to Abraham, "As for your wife, you must no longer call her Sarai; Sarah will be her name. (16) I will bless her and will give you a son through her. I will bless her and she will become a mother of nations. Kings of countries will come from her!" (17) Then Abraham bowed down with his face to the ground and laughed as he said to himself, "Can a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (18) Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live before you!" (19) God said, "No, Sarah your wife is going to bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac. I will confirm my covenant with him as a perpetual covenant for his descendants after him. (20) As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will indeed bless him, make him fruitful, and give him a multitude of descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes; I will make him into a great nation. (21) **But I will establish my covenant with Isaac**, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year."*

Genesis 22:15-18 *The LORD's angel called to Abraham a second time from heaven (16) and said, "I solemnly swear by my own name," decrees the LORD, 'that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, (17) I will indeed bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be as countless as the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the strongholds of their enemies. (18) Because you have obeyed me, all the nations of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using the name of your descendants.' "*

- A covenant is like a legal contract - God is the first party, and he is initiating the contract, and Abraham is the 2nd party, the representative of what will be the Jewish nation
- A contract is a way of verifying behavior
- Provisions of a contract are specifically spelled out to keep both parties honest and make sure the contract will be fulfilled; this is what we have here in this covenant. It is a literal covenant, with specific provisions
- No conditions are placed on Abraham, God is giving this to him, like a King giving an unconditional gift or reward to a loyal subject
- 13 provisions given in this covenant
 - God promises to develop a great nation from Abraham - we will see that the focus is on Israel here, not other nations that came from Abraham
 - God promises a literal piece of real estate - the boundaries are given (Genesis 12:7, 13:14-17, 15:7-21, 17:8)
 - God promises to bless Abraham - goes into effect immediately - Abraham becomes very wealthy
 - God promises that Abraham's name would be great - here we are still talking about him 4000 years later
 - Those who bless Abraham and his chosen seed will be blessed (Genesis 12:3)
 - Those who curse Abraham or treat him lightly will be cursed harshly
 - In Abraham all nations will be blessed - this is fulfilled in Jesus Christ
 - Sarah will have a son - not an adoption or through a surrogate wife, but through Sarah (Genesis 15:1-4, 17:15-21)
 - Abraham's descendants would spend 400 years in bondage in Egypt (15:13-15)
 - Other nations would come from Abraham (not just Israel) - many Arab nations can

trace their lineage back to Abraham through Ishmael or Abraham's 2nd wife Keturah (17:3-6)

- God changes his name from Abram to Abraham
- Sarai's name is changed to Sarah ("My princess" to "the queen") 17:5
- Sign of the covenant is circumcision

Implications of the covenant

- Seven of these are personal promises to Abraham - keep in mind that Abraham never possessed all the land of this promise during his lifetime, so **it still waits to be fulfilled, and there must be a resurrection of Abraham to accomplish it.** See Matt. 22:29-32.
- Some of these are national promises to Israel, and there are promises to the Gentiles
- Abraham had eight sons through three different women - Hagar, Sarah, Keturah, but God only confirmed the covenant through Isaac, none of the other sons. Islam lies about this. (Gen. 26:2-24) Then the covenant is confirmed again with only one of Isaac's sons - Jacob, in Gen. 28:13. Jacob is the beginning of the Jewish nation.
- The task was to remain separate and be a blessing to the surrounding people. They failed at this, they married Canaanites, so God sent them into slavery in Egypt. But then God delivered them, brought them back to the land in Exodus.
- In 1948 when Israel became a new nation, Truman was president. Truman had grown up in a church that taught the Bible dispensationally, he understood this covenant that God had given the land to Israel permanently, and despite the advice from the state department, he formally recognized the State of Israel. FDR would never have done so, which may be why he died, and Truman became president. God has used the US to bless Israel, and that is probably responsible for why the US has received so many blessings from God (vs. 3), until recently when the support for Israel seems to be waning and God seems to be removing his hand from this country.
- This proves that DOCTRINE MATTERS. It changes history.

THE SEED

We must be careful not to spiritualize the Old Testament to make it fit a preconceived doctrine. If you spiritualize the Abrahamic Covenant because you believe that the Church has replaced Israel, you end up spiritualizing your way through the whole Old Testament. It was not written to be spiritualized! All the details in the genealogies, the legal agreements, the places and people in the stories - these are physical, historical details, and they were meant to be taken literally.

This is not talking about a new way to interpret the Bible, but just being straightforward about it, taking it in its plain, normal sense.

Two important aspects of the covenant:

1. The seed promise is fulfilled in a miraculous way down through history. The seed are physical descendants of Abraham. You cannot spiritualize it, it is a physical link.
2. Though it is a physical link, it is produced by miraculous means. God is constantly trying to tell us that it is He that is doing the work of the promises.

Another important aspect of the contract is that it must be understandable to everyone to be effective. If it is not linguistically understandable, then believers cannot trust that God means what He says. You cannot have priests telling us what it says and assuring us of the trustworthiness of God, we must all be able to read it and understand it for ourselves. This is why the Protestant reformation was so important.

The Bible was not meant to be interpreted by scholars and high priests, or by some obscure mystical hermeneutic, it was meant to be easily understood by every one of us.

As W. F. Albright observed, of all religions in the world **only in the Bible are there actual contracts between God and man**. The reason, of course, is that only in the Bible is there an infinite-personal Creator who speaks words of revelation! Paganism opposes this truth at the most foundational level. In other religions the Gods are changeable, unstable, so a contract wouldn't make sense. You can't make a contract with a God who might change their mind tomorrow, or be replaced by another God. The God of the Bible is only one big enough to do this with.

This is a big problem to get around for pagans. How do they deal with the instability of their Gods? They use an impersonal force like chance or "fate". The "Star Wars" movies are good examples of pagan thought (The force be with you, etc.)

To have a basis for a contract like this, you have to have an infinite, all-powerful, yet personal God. The AMAZING thing is that you have this infinite personal God that condescends to us to let us verify His behavior!! Why does He do that? He's condescending to our weakness - our ability to trust in Him.

This shows that to undermine the trustworthiness of the Bible is to undermine God's promises. His covenants are our way of verifying God's behavior, His trustworthiness.

The Parties to the Abrahamic Covenant

- Whereas in the new world covenant of Noah's day, the parties included all descendents of Noah--all the nations of men, in this covenant the parties are more limited. Only God on one hand, and Abraham together with his chosen descendents on the other hand (Gen. 17:7) are parties to it. So here we have the exclusivism, the rejection of mankind who are not of the "seed of Abraham".
- There is a mystery here. Paul claims in Galatians 3:29 that every believer saved in Christ is considered as being part of Abraham's descendents. If the blessing of salvation is to be limited to Abraham's progeny which comes into existence after the 70 nation groups in Genesis 10, how can "all nations"--obviously not descendents from Abraham--be blessed? How, for example, could Egyptians or Ethiopians who pre-existed all of Abraham's physical children be blessed in him? Just how is Abraham "father" to Egyptians or Ethiopians who are not descended physically from him? Is Paul allegorizing the Abrahamic Covenant rather than taking it literally? Has the contract lost its legal force?
- Answer - The seed eventually comes down, physically and miraculously through Abraham, to Jesus. So, Jesus adopts us into His family, which means we're both children of God, and also children of Abraham. This is not some mystical link with Abraham, as some would teach, but a legal adoption by Jesus through His physical link with Abraham.

THE LAND

- This is another physical promise. This is spelled out in detailed terms. It is a real place. This promise means that Abraham's descendents will move in and the people that are there will have to be kicked out. This happens with the Canaanites in Exodus and Joshua.
- This theme goes all the way through the end of the Bible. Who does not have a place in heaven, the New Jerusalem? Who is excluded? Unbelievers, those who refuse to submit to God. The believers are the ones who get to go in and enjoy the promise.
- This theme is the setup for the rest of the Bible, and one of the best arguments for the inspiration of scripture, as it shows an inherent continuity and coherence throughout the Bible.

TRUTHS THAT DISRUPT

- We have seen so far in history that it marches along, with paganism, rebelliousness against God growing stronger, and then God interrupts, disrupting the flow of sinful man from the outside. For example, God's call to Abraham was very disruptive to his life.
- God is on the outside of the world system, because man has chosen to put him there. So when God speaks, He speaks from outside the system, and has to disrupt it. From here on through the rest of the Bible, the calls of God and the truths of God are "disruptive truths".

The Signing of the Abrahamic Covenant. Contracts are signed by the parties responsible for carrying out the terms. In the prior new world covenant God alone was responsible for carrying out its terms, so God alone signed it with physical replica of His throne's glory--the rainbow. In this covenant, too, **God alone is responsible for carrying out its terms so He alone signs it.**

Because the covenant involved actual family units headed by responsible fathers (the divine institution of family), for a specific family to qualify for full covenant blessings, the father-head had to see that all males in his house were circumcised (Gen. 17:9-14). Circumcision was a covenant ritual of obedience showing faith. This ritual was divinely-designed to point at critical spiritual truths.

1. Circumcision revealed that the fallen flesh is present from birth so it was administered in Israel to infants rather than to adolescents as in pagan cultures (Lev. 12:2-3).

2. Circumcision identified sexual propagation, particularly the male sperm, as responsible for linking all mankind into the sin of Adam (Gen. 5:3; Rom. 5:12-14; Heb. 7:4-10). This radically devalues sex as "the" creative force as it universally is considered in paganism.

3. Circumcision did not necessarily imply that the child was regenerate (Ishmael was circumcised in Genesis 17:25 but apparently was an unbeliever--Gen. 21:9; Rom. 2:25-29; 4:11-12). Rituals do not always imply reality.

4. Circumcision testified to an analogy between surgery performed on the organ of fleshly reproduction of physical life and miraculous surgery on the organ of spiritual life—the "heart" (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Col. 2:11-13). There is the idea here that circumcision is a kind of "corrective surgery".

The Legal Terms of the Abrahamic Covenant. The legal commitments God made can be summarized in three promises, each having both a particular application to Israel and a universal application to all mankind. Both are important to verifying God's performance and thus His trustworthy nature.

1. Land. God promised that this family would possess eternal title to specific real estate from near Egypt northward to at least Syria [9] (Gen. 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:8). This promise included land not only for the nation Israel but also for the location of the eternal location of the cosmic Temple of God, the everlasting New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22). This promise does far more than assure various borders in future history; it virtually shapes the everlasting planet earth! Planet earth is the theological center of the universe. The land promise cannot be "spiritualized" and transferred to some mystical state of the Church. This promise, according to Jesus, even implies the physical resurrection of believers (Matt. 22:31-32).

- This promise is given to Israel, but ultimately is a blessing to all believers because the center of redemption for the Kosmos is here in this real estate. It implies that when the earth is recreated (Rev. 21) it will have a layout very similar to the land now.

2. Seed. God promised that Abraham would father a family ("seed") that would become very numerous and survive throughout all history (Gen. 12:2; 13:15-17; 15:5,13-16,18; 17:1-8; 22:17). This family would include not only Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes but also the promised Seed of the Woman. Through Christ as Seed of the Woman, as the "circumciser" of human hearts, as one descended from Abraham (Matt. 1), believers from all nations become by adoption in Christ the children of Abraham. Abraham's seed would come about, beginning with Isaac, miraculously. The seed was never merely physical descent. The New Testament fulfillment, therefore, is not some disconnected "spiritualized" interpretation of the term "seed"; it flows directly from the miraculously-born physical seed of Abraham.

3. World-wide Blessing. Finally God promised exceeding blessing upon this family that would reach outward to all men (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). According to Paul the term "blessing" includes all that is meant by salvation in Christ (Gal. 3:14). The nations, therefore, are blessed "in Abraham" for it is through him that God reaches out to the world. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament the God of Israel is worshipped as the God of all nations (note, for example, the words in Psalms 47:9; 100:1; 126:2b).

You could read the rest of the stories of the Old Testament in terms of these three principles of the covenant; you'll see something of the covenant in every story. What's exciting is that it makes the rest of the Bible an adventure story, where you see how God is working out this covenant in history. They're all about this covenant and whether people are going to trust God or not.

The Covenant and the Kingdom. By now you should be able to see that God's call to Abraham was a major shift in history. It established visible opposition to the growing paganism. From now on there would be war between Babylon and Jerusalem until the final triumph over evil. On one side there would be the Kingdom of Man ever seeking to thwart God's ban on one-world government under fallen leadership. There would be the ever-present pagan agenda of an autonomous destiny, free of God's interference and accountability to Him. Without a creation, without a fall, without a flood, and without a covenant, man thinks he at last can be free to make of himself whatever he wishes.

On the other side there would be the growing Kingdom of God program that preserves human history's "secrets" that paganism so desperately suppresses. Radically different at the most basic presuppositional level, this agenda comes from above, predefined before all human thought. Faith and grace, not works, would be the new modus operandi dependent upon specific words from God in contractual form for all to see. *Charles Clough*

Let's look more closely at this Covenant process. Get your fingers ready to turn pages, we're going to take a journey through the Bible to see how the Covenant is brought up again and again, and how important it is in the plan of God. As we leave Genesis 12, this Covenant is going to be a progressive revelation throughout scripture. **Those of you reading this from the email, please look up these verses, it will be worth it to you!**

Within that Abrahamic Covenant we have the promise of:

1) A nation of people

2) A geographical area of land

3) A government

That is implicit, but dormant in the Abrahamic Covenant. It will not all appear at once. The promises of God are so sure, however, that as we move through the Old Testament you'll see all of God's dealing with the Nation of Israel is to bring this Covenant into fruition, where the Nation of Israel will now be a nation of people who are unique, separated, and different from all other nations. God is going to put them into a land He will promise to them. As we move on into Chapter 15, we'll see God actually deed that land promised to the man Abram ... deed it according to Oriental custom. Then we'll see His promise of a government. That government will be headed up in their King. We know Him as the Messiah, the Son of God. Now, a little review of the land:

Genesis 15:7

In this next verse we have the same promise, not given to Abram, not even to Moses, but given to Joshua.

Joshua 1:2-4

In verse 4 we find the geographical outline. It is clearly put there that God is giving to this little nation a particular territory. Of course, in the twentieth century millions of Jews migrated back to the land and, in 1948, Israel became a nation again. Unfortunately, the leaders of many of our mainline denominations are, for the most part, saying that the present-day Jew in Israel has nothing to do with the Jew of the Old Testament. (Some 80% of the people in the pews are in opposition to that.) The Jew in Israel today is the same Jew of the Bible. He hasn't lost a thing. "a Jew is a Jew is a Jew"! He's still a Jew, and after almost 3000 years of being out there amongst the non Jew people, a Jew is still a Jew!

Look at America! We're just over 200 years old as a nation. How many Americans are still pure from their original nationality? Not many. We've all intermarried to where there is no longer a pure Englishman, or pure German, or a pure anything else. We've amalgamated and the Jew never did. This is what makes the Word of God particularly believable. As one has said, "If there is any proof that this is the Word of God it is the Jew, as all of the promises God gave to this nation back in Genesis 12, and through the Old Testament, are still valid promises as the Jew is still a Jew." Now, had he lost his national identification, these promises couldn't hold. The Jew would be gone. But he's not. He is still a Jew. There are about 3.8 million Jews now living in Israel. Remember, they've been coming in at almost 1000 a day. There are still

at least that many in Russia; somewhere between two and three million. There is another million or two scattered around the world. The largest Jewish community today is still in America; somewhere between five and six million! So there are still a lot of Jews who are going to have to find their way back to this Promised Land. **But I want you to see that, over and over again, the Bible depicts it as the land that God gave to the Nation of Israel.**

Another thing that is hard to comprehend, is how the nations of the world today can debate whether Israel has a right to exist. They're actually debating whether Israel has a right to be where she is. There's no room for debate. God has given it to them. Granted, God, in His sovereignty, more than once over the years took them out of the land; took the ten tribes of the north clear up into Assyria. Later on He took the two tribes of the south out to Babylon for seventy years. But they came back, rebuilt the Temple, and the Nation of Israel was on the scene for the coming of Christ the first time. Then, when they rejected the Messiah, and continued to reject all the overtures that Peter and the eleven made toward them forty years after the Crucifixion, around 70 A.D., once again, God saw fit to take them out of the land, let their Temple be ruined, destroyed; and they were dispersed ... But according to His promises, what is He doing? He's bringing them back and they're coming in from, you might say, the four corners of the world.

We just have a couple more Scripture verses to look at with regard to God's promising them the land. Then we're going to look at the government - the promise of their King. Ezekiel Chapter 37 is the account of the dry bones. Ezekiel is given a vision of a valley full of dry bones. They have been there a long, long time and they are well-bleached. Ezekiel is told to prophesy on those bones and what happens? Suddenly they come together and there's a great shaking and rattling before Ezekiel's eyes. But remember, it's a vision. It's a symbolic picture that God is showing us. Then the flesh comes upon them, then the skin, and finally breath comes into them.

Ezekiel 37:9-14

Israel had been in graves, which is how God refers to the Gentile nations. Israel out of the land is desolate. Remember, Israel out of the land is without a Temple, without a priesthood, without an altar. They are hopelessly out of touch with God when they are out of the Promised Land. So the Word of God refers to these habitations in the Gentile areas as graves. They are like a dead people insofar as God is concerned, but He is bringing them back to life. How? By bringing them back to their Promised Land.

Ezekiel 37:21,22

This should be enough references with regard to the promise of a land. Now to II Samuel, Chapter 7 for the third part of this Covenant, which is the promise of a government. Here we have God speaking to King David through the prophet Nathan.

II Samuel 7:12-16

He is talking of Solomon, but it goes beyond Solomon. It's about the whole Nation of Israel in her future role. Note the conditions. In other words, God would use other nations to punish the Nation of Israel. The first word in verse 15 is "but" - the flip side. If they are disobedient, God is going to bring in other nations, duntrod them and maybe even disperse them. In spite of what God may have to do in disciplining Israel, watch the promise, "*But my loyal love will not be removed from him.*"

There is a teaching amongst most of Christendom - Catholic and Protestant as well; that when Israel rejected their Messiah and crucified Him, God did away with all these promises to Israel and gave them to the new Israel - the Church. That is man's idea. That is not what The Book teaches. The Book plainly states that regardless of what Israel does, God says, "*But my loyal love will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.*" Saul is merely used here as an example. Verse 16 gives the promise of a government that is going to rule over this little nation within its geographical area.

Just as I did with the word "Jew," I say, "the kingdom is the kingdom is the kingdom!" When you see the word "kingdom" in Scripture, unless the text definitely shows otherwise, it is referring to the kingdom that will come as the result of the Abrahamic Covenant. It is the kingdom that is going to basically be over the Nation of Israel, who is then in their Promised Land with the government all Scripture points to, when their Messiah will be their King. The Messiah **has** to be of the lineage of David. (We'll look at that in a future lesson). So He says, "Your house." That's where we get the term "the House of David." It's a royal house. It's a royal, kingly line out of which the King finally came. So, "Your house and your kingdom will stand before me permanently." That is why we know God is looking further than just the little kingdom

of Israel under David and under Solomon. This is the beginning of eternity's promises. The other thing I want you to always remember is that even though this earthly kingdom is promised here to Israel, the Book of Revelation puts on a time limit of 1000 years. Consequently, we refer to it as the 'Millennium.'

It is a definitive period of time, but the 1000-year reign of Christ is merely the introduction for the eternal setting. You get to Revelation, Chapter 21 and what do you have? ... A new heaven and a new earth! This whole kingdom economy will move right on into eternity. Eternity is going to be a place of intense activity, but without all of the problems, tribulations, sorrows and the things that we have now. Don't ever look at Heaven as many look at it - some place that is going to be boring and monotonous. It is going to be quite the opposite. This kingdom now promised to King David, and which Solomon would extend (although it would be interrupted) will, over a period of time, become a viable reality. God the Son, the Messiah, will become the King, and it is going to be a glorious kingdom! Turn to Psalm 89. I am trying to take these in chronological order so you can see. However, this is by no means all of the references; only a sampling.

Psalm 89:36,37

"His (David) seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." How long is that? - forever!

That's this coming kingdom! You might say, what has that to do with me? Well, Paul writes, and John writes in Revelation, that when this kingdom is finally set up, you and I, as Church Age believers are going to be a part and parcel of that kingdom by ruling and reigning with Him; that is, with Christ. So it is important that we understand this kingdom that is going to be coming.

Isaiah Chapter 9 verse 6, is a verse that is always well-known, especially at Christmas-time, but it's a prophetic utterance given to the Nation of Israel. As you study your Bible, you should always determine to whom a particular portion was addressed. It is evident that most of the Old Testament is addressed to the Nation of Israel. Isaiah the Prophet is addressing the nation.

Isaiah 9:6

The mighty God: Many theologians are trying to tell us today that Jesus never claimed to be God. That He was not Deity. That He was not the pre-existent Creator/God. But He is, and He was, and He always will be. So He shall be called The mighty God. These are all terms associated with this coming King, the Messiah, the Son of God to Whom we will be introduced in the New Testament as Jesus The Christ. These are His terms of Deity.

John 14:9

One of His names shall be "The everlasting Father." Note it is capitalized. The Prince of Peace: I know the Psalms instruct us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. That's what Jerusalem means: the City of Peace. But it hasn't been a city of peace for thousands of years, and it isn't now. We are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and do you know why? Because Jerusalem will know no peace until the Prince of Peace returns. When you pray for the peace of Jerusalem you are praying for the return of Christ, which is very appropriate.

Isaiah 9:7

It is going to be a government without corruption, without turmoil, without war; it is going to be a perfect, righteous, peaceful, government. Where is He going to rule? On the throne of David. It's going to be the Almighty, Eternal, Infinite God Who is going to bring this all about; this King Who is coming, Who came and was rejected but is coming again. We are not exhausting all these references by any means. We are just picking out the ones that are easiest to understand; the ones that are most appropriate for this kind of a study.

Jeremiah 23:5

See that it goes back to King David again, and notice that *He shall rule* (not in Heaven, but where?) *in the land.*" Now do you see how plainly all this comes through? This is the promised kingdom that is also going to go right on into eternity. Where is it? On the earth! Few people have any concept of that. They think of Heaven as some place way out there. Well, yes - the Throne Room of God, the very Paradise we think of as Heaven - is 'up there' someplace. But the Heaven you and I are pointing to, the Heaven you and I are going to be intrinsically involved in, if we are a believer, is going to

come down on this earth. Christ will rule and reign upon the earth from the City of Jerusalem, the City of Peace.

Jeremiah 23:6

There will be no sin. There will be no corruption. It will be a perfect government. Oh, how the world longs for that. I have read, and maybe some of you have known it for years, power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Isn't that true? Go back through history. It has always been true that whenever a king or an emperor gets absolute power, he ends up with the most corrupt government on earth. The same is within our democracy. You get an individual who is come to power and it isn't long until he is corrupt. It is just human nature. That is not going to be the case here. It is going to be a kingdom of righteousness. Now read on:

Jeremiah 23:7-8

This is being fulfilled before our very eyes. The Jews are coming back to the land from Russia and from Albania. In a recent **Jerusalem Post** I read, there were only 100 or 200 Jews left in Albania. They have all immigrated to Israel. In 1991, 14,000 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted from Addis Ababa to Israel in 33 hours! The average American never got that. In 33 hours the Israel Air Force airlifted 14,000 Jews!. During the airlift, several babies were born. Scripture says it would happen.

Why did the Jews end up outside of their Promised Land for the last 2000 years? Not because they left voluntarily. God took them out. Again, it was a disciplinary thing, because they rejected everything that was offered at His first coming. They crucified Him. They did not repent of that. After the 40 years of the Book of Acts, God's patience finally ran out. He let the Temple be destroyed by Titus, and the Jew was dispersed into the nations of the world by a Sovereign act of God. The land was left empty, to be taken over by anyone. Now God is ready to bring His people back. The usurpers are going to have to be moved out. People don't like that, but it is still a fact of Scripture, and God is Sovereign.

This is the land God promised in Genesis 15. Now, almost 4000 years later, it is coming to pass; the Word of Genesis is coming true. Turn to Jeremiah 31. Even though it is a repetition, remember that Scripture has the same rule of thumb which we have in our everyday conversation. If you want to emphasize something to someone, you repeat it! That's what Scripture does. When you see something repeated two or three times within a book, or within a chapter, take notice. God is making an emphatic point. Here is a good one:

Jeremiah 31:8

Part of that just took place not long ago. But the end isn't yet. They are going to keep coming in from the four corners of the world. How to assimilate all of these Jews is a big headache for the Israeli government. Most of them can't speak the Hebrew language. The Russian Jews are having a hard time amalgamating because of the language barrier. The first thing the Israeli government does is put all these people into a language school so they can function within the society. It is mind-boggling to find apartments for them. Many are living two and three families in a small apartment. The economy has to absorb them. How do you suppose the native Israelis feel about their job security? Many of these Jews, especially those coming from Russia, are highly educated. Israel now has the lowest ratio of people per doctor of any nation on earth because so many of these Russian Jews are medical doctors; they are scientists, engineers. The Sovereign God is behind this otherwise impossible task.

Zechariah 14:1,2

Zechariah, just like Isaiah, is writing to Israel - the Jew. This verse is speaking of the battle of Armageddon as we know it from the Book of Revelation. In other words, it looks like there is no hope for the Jews in the area of Jerusalem and Judea because of the multitudes of Gentile armies surrounding them. We've seen this on a smaller scale in the Middle East. That's just a preview of how quickly the nations of the world can bring their armies to the Middle East. It's going to happen on a full-scale some day; we don't know when. *"On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which lies to the east of Jerusalem (the day of His Second Coming),..."* In the Book of Acts, at the time of His ascension, what did the angel say?

Acts 1:11

In other words, He left from the Mount of Olives standing on His two feet and He went up. He's going to come back to the Mount of Olives the same way He left. He is going to come down and stand on two feet. That's the literal, physical Second Coming of Christ as we see it even here in Zechariah.

Zechariah 14:3-4

Don't spiritualize and say there must be a mountain in Heaven by that name. No, it's the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Then He expresses some of the other things that are going to take place.

Zechariah 14:9

Note that He shall be king not over Heaven, but over all the earth. That is plain English. There's no way you can foul that up. Now verse 16:

Zechariah 14:16

All these things are going to come one right after the other. He is going to come down to the Mount of Olives; He'll be setting up His Kingdom; and everything is going to start moving forward. There are going to be survivors. Next year (the Lord willing) we'll study prophecy in detail. We'll show you particularly from the Scripture who the survivors are who will go into this earthly kingdom. I'm not talking about us because we are going to be translated before all this takes place. We're going to come back in resurrected bodies. We're not going to be flesh and blood as we know it, procreating, marrying and so forth. But there will be people in that category. They will be flesh and blood and partakers of the earthly kingdom. So it says those who have survived (the awful events of the Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon) and who are believers, will go into the kingdom.

In Chapter 3 of John's Gospel Jesus told Nicodemus as he was approached by him, "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven." There's the word kingdom, but it's the same kingdom. The kingdom is the kingdom is the kingdom. It is this kingdom that is coming upon the earth. No unbeliever will go into that kingdom; flesh and blood or otherwise. So here we have the survivors of all the terrible events of the Tribulation. They have survived the Battle of Armageddon.

For any of you who have had any Bible teaching at all, I think you realize that Matthew is the one of the Four Gospels that depicts Christ as the King. (Mark depicts Him as the Servant, John depicts Him as the Son of God, and Luke depicts Him as the Son of Man.) In order to be a King what do you have to have? ... A genealogy. A king assumes royal throne by virtue of the royal family.

Matthew 1:1

Then what? Period! Now Abraham isn't the beginning of the human race but that is where this genealogy stops. Why? Because His becoming the King is based upon that promise made to Abraham - not to anyone ahead of him. So, this genealogy will only go back as far as Abraham.

Turn to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 3 where we have a different genealogy, what most people think is the genealogy of Mary, though it doesn't say so. (In Matthew it is the genealogy of Joseph.)

Luke 3:38

Now do you see the difference in those genealogies? The one in Luke, believed to be Mary's, is the blood line of Christ. That goes all the way back to Adam, because we're all sons of Adam. But with regard to His ascension to the royal throne, it only goes back to Abraham, because it is in the Abrahamic Covenant that we have the promise of a king. Do you see how beautifully and accurately Scripture keeps everything? We'll pick this up in more detail in future lessons, but for now I want you to remember promise of this king over this earthly kingdom all fits with the King of Kings, and The Lord of Lords.

To review, the Abrahamic Covenant has within it, in a latent form, the promise of a nation of people who would be located in the geographical area of land over which God would provide the government in the Person of the Messiah, the

Son of God, Israel's King. I want to carry this `king' aspect of the government all the way into the New Testament so you can see God has been continuously, ever since Genesis Chapter 12, moving the Nation of Israel forward to the time when the King makes His appearance.

In Exodus, where Israel receives the Law, we'll find the reason was to prepare the nation for the fruition of this Covenant. She had to be a prepared people. God chose the system of Law to teach them. That's why Paul calls it a `schoolmaster' in the Book of Galatians; a tutor to prepare Israel for a role some time in the future. In light of the third part of the Covenant, the government/king, our New Testament introduces Him genealogically to prove He is the rightful heir to the throne of David over which the King of Kings would rule the kingdom.

Even though Joseph was not the physical father of Christ, he was the legal father. Going all the way back to Abraham, coming up to David, and then Solomon, you'll see that at Solomon there's a fork in the family tree. One line will come down and form the genealogy of Mary; the other line forms the genealogy of Joseph. The reason Scripture records this is to prove that Christ was the rightful heir to David's throne by virtue of the bloodline of Mary.

The virgin birth fits so beautifully physiologically and scientifically, in that the blood system of Christ originated with God, who was the Father, but He was human because He was born of the ovum, or the egg, or the seed of the woman. Consequently, these two genealogies follow all the way down from David to Christ, Joseph proving that he was in the line because he was the **legal father** of Christ even though he wasn't the **physical father**. Mary, of course, was the physical mother. So the genealogies, which ended at Christ, both go back to King David. David, in turn, goes back to Abraham.

Matthew 2:1,2

It doesn't say three wise men. We don't know how many there were. We don't really know who the wise men were or where they came from. But evidently God revealed to them that the promised King of Israel was now on the scene. This came from all the Old Testament prophecies that He would be born.

Matthew 21:1-3

This is referred to twice in the Old Testament: that Christ would come into Jerusalem as Israel's King; not riding upon the white steed of Roman emperors and generals, but upon a donkey - and not even a full grown donkey, but the unbroken colt of one. Now it's time for it to be fulfilled, so Jesus tells the Twelve, "There's the village. Go and get that little colt."

Matthew 21:4

So there's that constant thought of the King - the King - the King. We have two thoughts coming through the Old Testament. The one would be the coming of a King and his kingdom. Running parallel with all of those verses is another theme of a suffering Savior. There is Isaiah 53:

Isaiah 53:7

A suffering Saviour was also promised. There had to be a suffering Savior because, as we mentioned earlier, when Nicodemus began to ask questions concerning the kingdom, what did Jesus tell him? ... `Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom.' There will be no unbelievers in that kingdom. So there had to be a Salvation.

Now, let's turn to Luke. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was a priest working at the Temple serving. He had been stricken dumb, and at the birth of John when they asked his mother what they were going to name the baby, instead of using a family name she said, "His name will be John." They were all amazed that they had never heard that before, so they asked Zacharias what the child's name should be. He told them to get him a writing pad and he, too, wrote the name John. All the people were amazed because this was a miracle in the works. The Scripture then says:

Luke 1:64-67

Before you go any further, you must ask yourself a question. If someone is filled with the Holy Spirit as they were in those days, does he speak wishful thinking? No! What Zacharias is going to utter is prompted by the Holy Spirit who has

filled him. This is not just a bunch of wishful thinking from a nationalistic, patriotic, religious Jew. But now look what Zacharias is prompted to say.

Luke 1:68,69

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;..." Of whom? See what the Book says. Many people just glance over that and figure God belongs to everybody. (Well, He does, but in some places we have to remember it's the Lord God dealing with Israel.) ,... *"because he has come to help and has redeemed his people.*

. " What does redemption speak of? Salvation! So here is the salvation of Israel being offered.

See how Jewish all of this is? No Gentile belonged to the House of David. This was uniquely Jewish ground, and Zacharias is speaking on Jewish ground because he is speaking in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. Israel is a nation, Israel is in the land, and what does Israel still need? That promised government - that King. Now Zacharias, by inspiration, is telling us it's about to happen:

Luke 1:70,71

Who were Israel's enemies? The Arabs, then, like they are now. The Egyptians were always enemies of Israel, along with the Syrians and other various Mediterranean nations. This is what he has reference to. *"that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us* (the Jew/Israel)."

Luke 1:72,73

Do you see why we're taking the time with all these verses? It all goes back to the Abrahamic Covenant. It just keeps coming, coming and coming, and here it is in the New Testament. Many of us have been brainwashed into thinking that the Bible is divided at the Old and the New Testaments. If you possibly can, throw that thinking off and realize that the first four Books, and even a part of the Book of Acts, are still really more Old Testament than New. These Books are extensions of all the Old Testament promises which looked forward to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. In our next Scripture reference you'll see what I'm talking about when I say, "even into the Book of Acts." The main reason we have so much confusion in Christendom is because people refuse to see the difference between God dealing with Israel on the basis of the Covenants, and His dealing with us Gentiles on the basis of His Grace. All of this is going to come in, Zacharias can see, because God made that Covenant with Abraham. Verse 74 tells us what that Covenant guaranteed.

Luke 1:74

Look at Israel today. Isn't this what she wants? Every Middle East nation has a vowed statement within their government that they'll not rest until Israel is driven into the sea. What were the words Saddam Hussein used at the height of the Gulf War? - "We're going to incinerate them." And the Palestinians whooped and hollered when they heard it. The Iranians are saying the same thing now. Why? Because they all want Israel destroyed. It's never been any different. Zacharias knew this and said, "Now we're finally going to be released from this fear; we're going to have the tranquility and peace that the Covenant promised."

Luke 1:75,76

The word really implied here, not used here but in other places, is the word `herald.' John the Baptist was a herald. In ancient history a herald would come in maybe a day or two before a great emperor or the leader of an empire, and he would simply begin at one end of the city and would, like a trumpet, announce the coming of his emperor. He would never go back and retrace his steps. He would announce it as he would go through the city, and that was it. It was a one-time heralding.

Luke 1:77-79

Zacharias had it straight, and he should have. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. Let's turn to one more Scripture in the New Testament portion that deals with this Abrahamic Covenant. Believe it or not, it goes all the way into the Book of Acts. Turn to Acts 2:22 to the great Pentecostal sermon by Peter. Again, most people just don't stop to realize who Peter

is talking to. I'm again giving you little shots at Acts. It'll be a little while before we get down to a verse by verse study of the Book of Acts.

Acts 2:22

Notice who he's addressing. Is he speaking to Gentiles? No.

Acts 2:36

Let who know? That's Jew Only! It doesn't include Gentile.

Now let's go to Chapter 3. Peter is preaching his second sermon in the Book of Acts. Remember, this is just shortly after Pentecost - 50 days after the ascension. Come all the way down to verse 20 where Peter is announcing that if Israel would repent and believe Who Jesus really was, that He would come back and set up His kingdom.

Acts 3:18-21

God is sending Jesus to be what? Their King! He has been crucified now, so He can now rightfully be their King. This isn't an afterthought or an accidentally.

Acts 3:24,25

They told prophetically of what days? The appearance of the King, His Crucifixion, His Resurrection, His ascension, but His soon return. Remember, the Bible writers all thought it was going to happen right in order.

What is Peter claiming? Abrahamic Covenant! Peter is still claiming no more than the promises of this Covenant. They are already the nation, they are already in the land, but they want the King. They couldn't have the King unless Israel repented to the last person. Everyone had to, and then Christ could have come and set up His kingdom and Israel could have been the missionary force; Israel could have been the evangelist. But what did Israel do with it? They continued to reject it so that God, not by accident or not as an afterthought, but in His foreknowledge said, 'I'll go another WAY.' And He went to the Gentiles with the Gospel of grace. But you see that Peter, at this time, is still speaking of the Abrahamic Covenant.

I hope you can see how important this covenant is, and that it is yet to be completely fulfilled. This is why prophecy scholars say, "Watch Israel", because the nation of Israel is the key to the fulfillment of God's plans. It started with Abraham and has not changed. The Bible says that Israel will someday turn back to God and recognize Jesus as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). When that happens, God will begin to fulfill all His promises to Israel. The reason this is so exciting to us is because we get to share in the promised blessings, through our adoption into Abraham's family through Jesus Christ!

Dusty Rhodes