

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY—April 25, 2015
Chris Katulka, A Promise He's Keeping, Part 2 – The Land
Genesis 12:1-3

Last week we started a series called *A Promise He's Keeping* where we unpacked the Abrahamic Covenant or Abrahamic Promise. A promise that God made to Abram that becomes a foundational promise in the Scriptures, remember Abrams name doesn't change to Abraham until Genesis 17. The promise made to Abraham acts like a thread that runs through the bible keeping the direction of God's plan of redemption for everyone moving forward. As we looked at the promise last week we saw that in Genesis 12 the promise is made up of three major elements: a promise concerning the Land, a promise concerning Abraham's Descendants, and a promise of a Blessing. We ended our previous message saying that the God deeded the Land that we know to be Israel to Abraham and his descendants through an ancient ritual (Gen 15:9-21).

In this message I want us to look at the second portion of the Abrahamic Covenant: God's promise concerning Abraham's descendants. When God called Abraham to leave his homeland of Ur by faith, trusting only in the Lord's voice, Abraham left on the premise of God's promises. One of those promises was, "And a will make you a great nation" (Gen 12:2). God already promised Abraham a special plot of land in Genesis 12:1, now He's assuring Abraham He will provide the people to fill the land because you

simply can't have "nation" without people, right? Something to remember, God made this promise to Abraham when he had no children. So I'm sure this promise became very personal to him, a promise of God that he would have a son to inherit what God has given to him.

[Abram walked by faith to the land of Canaan with the assumption God would provide a son so this is a very personal endeavor for Abram.]

So when Abraham arrived in the land a doubt set in that God would fulfill His promises since he and Sarah were still childless. In a very honest conversation between Abraham and God, Abraham says, "O Lord God What will you give me since I am childless, and the heir to my house is Eliezer of Damascus"(Gen. 15:2). Abraham explained to God in a simple way that he followed Lord to the land He promised yet Abraham's closest heir to inherit the divine promise is Eliezer of Damascus.

*Side note: It's questioned whether Damascus should probably not be used to refer to the place of Eliezer's origins, like the city of Damascus. There is a play on words occurring in the Hebrew language in Gen. 15:2 between "heir" and "Damascus". The end of Genesis 15:2 should probably be translated "Eliezer will possess it."*¹

God reassured Abraham of His intentions to provide a son as his heir, “This man [Eliezer] will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir” (Gen. 15:4). The Lord not only provided Abraham a direct descendent in the person of Isaac, but God also promised to Abraham, “‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” (Gen. 15:5). A “nation” just as God swore in Genesis 12:2.

Once again in the right time God fulfilled His promise. I want to stop for a minute and step back to see this passage more broadly. As believers we place our trust in the promises of God, and He’s made numerous promises to us that we can count on. But I know that sometimes in our walk with the Lord we can begin to question whether or not God will finish what He started in us. I’m sure Abraham thought that when He felt the absence of God in this area of his life. This passage struck me, God made a promise to Abraham, and God kept that promise, but he fulfilled it in His time, not Abrahams. In our world of instant gratification, when we can get whatever we want almost on the spot, God sees fit to unfold His plan for our lives at times that are both beneficial to us and to Him and His glory. However, I’m sure Abraham thought God’s timing was off just a little bit when he gave him his son Isaac at the age of 100.

Descendants to Descendant

Really God's promise to Abraham was both a promise that involved Abraham's one son Isaac, and then also a promise that he would be the father to innumerable descendants, which is the launching pad for the Lord's ultimate plan of redemption for all mankind.

[Remember the Abrahamic covenant is not exclusive... influence all of mankind]The term "descendants" in Genesis 15:5 is the Hebrew word "seed". In the context of Gen 15:5 the term "descendant" or "seed" is used in the plural referring the countless descendants that will originate from Abraham. In fact, you see this promise unfold throughout the book of Genesis when Abraham fathers Isaac, and Isaac fathers Jacob, and Jacob fathers his twelve sons, and the twelve sons father the Sons of Israel!

However, in the epistle to the Galatians Paul borrowed the term "seed" from the Abrahamic Covenant and inserted a divine twist by reading it in the singular form to speak of the one "descendant" that originated from Abraham, Jesus the Messiah, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ" (Gal. 3:16). Johnston in the book Jesus the Messiah rightly says, "God's promise of seed to Abraham would find its ultimate culmination in the Messiah as his descendant par excellence."²

The Abrahamic Covenant did not remain confined to the book of Genesis. Its purpose to build a "nation" that would come from

Abraham is found all throughout the scriptures. For instance, even when Israel was disobeying God and the covenant seemed strained, the Lord remained faithful to the disobedient nation because of the covenant he swore to Abraham (Deut. 9:5; 2 Kings 13:23). The Lord remained faithful to Abraham because it would be through this promised “nation” that one would come to bring redemption to all people. This divine and eternal covenant launched out of Genesis and set course to see an aspect of its fulfillment in one particular descendant of Abraham, Jesus the Messiah!