

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

Chris Katulka, A Promise He's Keeping, Part 1 - The Land
Genesis 12:1-3

You know, often times in the Old Testament God would reveal His plan and course of action in the form of a promise or covenant. The first covenant is found in Genesis 12, 15, and 17 with Abraham. The Abrahamic Covenant, as it's called, isn't a static promise that remains dormant in the beginning of Genesis, never to be mentioned or heard of again. Instead, it's a divine promise with a purpose, which can be traced throughout the entirety of Scripture. The Abrahamic Covenant is directed primarily to Abraham and his descendants (the nation of Israel), and even though it seems the promise is exclusive, the purpose for choosing Israel is so "all the families of the earth" would come to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Abrahamic Covenant is really the bedrock in God's redemptive plan for everyone. Even the late reformed theologian John Murray believed, "It is this Abrahamic covenant, so explicitly set forth in Gn. 15 and 17, that underlies the whole subsequent development of God's redemptive, word, and action..." (Murry, The Covenant of Grace, pg 4). God's promise to Abraham (Abram) begins in Genesis 12. This promise can be divided into three parts: land, descendants, and blessing. Over the next three weeks we will examine each element of the covenant. Today we will study the land portion of the promise. God proclaimed to Abraham (Abram) that if he departed from his hometown of Ur, his

family, and friends, and followed God he would receive a particular area of land. “Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you;” (Gen 12:1) The “land” promised in Genesis 12 was the land of Canaan, which over a course of time became known as the land of Israel. When Abraham arrived in Canaan by Genesis 15 he realized aspects of God’s promise in Genesis 12 were not being fulfilled as He said they would. Abraham questioned God’s faithfulness and asked how he could be sure God would give him the land He promised. God reassured Abraham in Genesis 15 that every aspect of His promise would be fulfilled by making (lit. cutting) a covenant with him. God commands Abraham to prepare particular animals for the covenant by cutting them in half. This act of cutting animals in two-pieces in Genesis 15:9-21 is an ancient covenant or treaty ritual, which was a customary practice in antiquity. Technically, Abraham and God should have walked through the animals together, however, in an interesting literary twist Abraham falls into a deep sleep and God Himself becomes the only party to enter into the promise. The writer of Hebrews later tells us that, “... when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself” (Heb. 6:13). When God passed quietly through the animal pieces He both guaranteed and signed the deed for Abraham and his descendants to claim the land promised to them. Here we see how God in His infinite wisdom designed a covenant that could not

be broken and would remain eternal forever because it's God's name on the ledger! Unlike human promises that can easily be changed, manipulated, or broken, God's divine name is forever attached to every aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. Ultimately, if this promise to Abraham fails... God fails... and if God fails, He's not God. Therefore, the land promised to Abraham and his descendants was deeded to them with an eternal promise and earnest guarantee that is still legally binding today. Unfortunately, the land element of the Abrahamic Covenant is often the portion to be most neglected because it demands a distinction between Israel and the Church and a future for Israel in the land. Folks, we cannot simply overlook future of Israel as it relates to the land portion of the covenant. This section of God's covenant to Abraham plays a major role in God's redemptive plan for everyone. The Lord gave a vision to Ezekiel the prophet, a vision of the Jewish people returning to the land of Israel from all over world, "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land (Israel)." (Ezk. 36:24). Upon God's supernatural restoration of the Jewish people to the land promised to them, God says He will use their restoration as a divine tool to show the unbelieving nations He is the One True God! "Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight" (Ezk. 36:23)!