

XXIX. Genesis in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis
The Land, The Seed, Kings and Other Things
Genesis 17
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In this study we will look closer at the Abrahmic covenant, how God's promises are made and how to understand them. Let's look at God's Word. It's the truth. Genesis 17:1-8 says [1] *When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, [2] that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."* [3] *Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, [4] "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. [5] No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. [6] I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. [7] And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. [8] And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We are in a series on Genesis and we're particularly using Genesis 17 as an opportunity to take a bigger, broader look at how the Bible holds together as a unity in its integrity. I want to start this study by sharing this little story. Kennedy Smart a father in our church said it's true and I want to believe it is true because Kennedy Smart taught Jim Kennedy how to share the Gospel from which Evangelism Explosion was developed. So if Jim Kennedy was taught by Kennedy Smart then I'm hoping and praying that this is a true story but it sounds a little suspect to me. It sounds more like a preacher's story to me.

Kennedy was sharing about a young man who decided to do a children's sermon every Sunday right before he gave the regular sermon. How many of you have ever taught children? They have one answer to every question and there is one guy who always answers every question. Who is it? I don't care how many kids are there, a boy named "Johnny" always answers the questions and what is his one answer? Who made Noah's ark? Jesus is the safe answer. It doesn't matter what question you ask they will answer 'Jesus' because they know that is a safe answer. They know if they use that answer you'll never tell them it's wrong. It's like when you've been a Presbyterian for a while you know the answer to every question is 'the glory of God.'

According to Kennedy the preacher really worked on this particular sermon and he asked the children, "What is about 5 or 6 inches long, gray and furry, with a long furry tail, gathers nuts and lives up in a tree?" Johnny raises his hand and the preacher says "Johnny, what's the answer?" Johnny says "Well preacher, I know the answer is Jesus but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me."

Actually Johnny is right. The answer is Jesus and that's why we're taking Genesis 17 and this covenant with Abraham to study.

In the last study we started in Genesis 17 by making a transformational truth observation. It is that God is saving a people in something called the covenant of grace and your Bible is a divinely, authored record of God's work of saving a people through the covenant of grace. The Bible systematically unfolds the covenant of grace, progressively revealing it through a series of covenants. In the Old Testament (covenant which is the same as testament), there are six covenants and all of them are unfolding the covenant of grace.

First there is the covenant with Adam where God says He'll give the woman a Seed and that Seed will defeat Satan. Then there is the covenant with Noah, stair stepping to the covenant with Abram where we are now. That will be followed by a covenant with Moses four hundred plus years later. Then that will be followed by a covenant with David. The people will be taken out of the land and will be brought back. That is called the Palestinian covenant when they are restored to the land. Then the final covenant, where it is all leading to, is the New Covenant in Jesus Christ with Jesus as the Mediator. Adam can't do it. Noah can't do it. Abram can't do it. David can't do it. The prophets can't do it. There is One God and One Mediator between God and man and it is the Man Christ Jesus. So what you have in your Bible from Genesis 4 to Revelation 22 is the consistent, unified, progressive unfolding of God's work of redemption in the covenant of grace until you get to the fullness of it in Jesus Christ. That's what we need to understand.

The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. Here is the way St. Augustine said it and preachers and teachers have said it this way ever since. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. In other words, Johnny was right. Everything in that Old Testament from the rainbow, the ark, the sin offerings, the burnt offerings, the wave offerings, the temple, the prophets, the priests, the kings, Jacob's ladder, and everything there finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Then you see the glory of the New Covenant as it moves to its consummation in the new heavens and the new earth.

That's why when you read in your Bible you'll read phrases in the New Testament that say Jesus said to the Pharisees, "you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, but they bear witness of Me." Life is the gift. That Old Testament you have bears witness of Me. There were two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Their faces were downcast and they had slow heart. Then beginning with Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and the Prophets (from Joshua all the way through to Malachi) Jesus explained Himself in all the Scriptures. They said "Did not our hearts burn within us when He explained the Scriptures to us?"

Paul sends Timothy this letter before he dies that says in II Timothy 3:14-15, *[14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the **sacred writings**, which are able to make you*

wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. What sacred writings did he have? It was the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. Let's take that transformational truth and build on it to understand this one today.

The key to understanding the full purpose of an Old Testament truth is to examine how it is fulfilled in Christ and then see how it is developed in the New Testament. So if the Old Testament conceals then what do I do? I want to go to my New Testament and look back. I want the New Testament to show me what the Old Testament is concealing. The New Testament opens up the Old Testament. You're lying in your bed, a nightlight is on but you can't really see and there is all kinds of shadows. There could be something in the shadows that you can't see so you reach into a drawer and pull out your high powered flashlight and start shining it all over the room. The corners are lit up and you begin to see everything that is in there to find out what is in there. That is Bible study. The Old Testament is full of shadows, types, prophecies and symbols. It is kind of dimly lit. It's there but I can't quite see it. That is when I come to the New Testament, the better covenant, the fulfillment.

I take the light of the New Testament and I shine it back on and say "Oh Jesus is the Tabernacle! Jesus is the Temple! Jesus is the offering! Jesus is the Priesthood! Jesus is the King of Kings! Jesus is the Prophet greater than all the prophets! Jesus is the Mediator of the covenant!" You begin to see that all of those things find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and now they make sense. That third step of the covenant of grace is unfolding to the New Covenant in the New Testament. You have it right here with the Abrahamic covenant. It is given in Genesis 12, 15 and now the third time in Genesis 17. So let's walk our way through it so that you have all of it in front of you.

The first section in Genesis 17 is the announcing of the covenant and the changing of Abraham's name. It's also the giving of another name for God. The book of Genesis keeps telling up who God is by giving us new names for God and here is a name that is El Shaddai meaning 'God Almighty.' This is the first of six times it will be used in the Old Testament directly. God tells Abraham that He will give him this covenant, land, a seed, a son that will come through Sarah and the last time God spoke to Abram he was 86 years old. Now he is 99 years old and God tells him he'll have a son through Sarah who is 90 years old. Abram has the verdict that she is as good as dead. I hope he did not share that with her. God tells him he'll not only have a son but a multitude of offspring that are as many as the stars, the sand, an innumerable host that will come from him and he'll have nations that come from him. Kings will come from him and now the Almighty has promised this to him. Don't look at Sarah but look at Me. Abram means father of many and the Lord changed his name to Abraham which means a father of a multitude.

Can you imagine that? You have walked around for thirteen years being named Abram that means father of many and you only have one kid through a surrogate mother. My name is Abraham now which means the father of a multitude and a multitude of nations. I can just hear what people are saying. This guy has gone crazy. It's not in Abraham and it's not in Sarah but it's in the

Lord. So the Lord makes him that promise. He changes his name and gives him all these promises of the covenant. Now there is the second section of Genesis 17. Now He announces the sign of the covenant. Let's look at it.

Genesis 17:9-14 says *[9] And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. [10] This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. [11] You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. [12] He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, [13] both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. [14] Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."*

He now gives him the covenant sign which is circumcision. This covenant sign says two things. One there is no hope in generation, you need regeneration. Two it's a bloody sign and there must be a death in order to secure My promises for you to be right with Me, for you to be Mine and for Me to be your God. There must be a sacrifice. It's a symbolic sacrifice and it says that we need regeneration. It also says that He is building the family into the way He operates in His covenant. God works through the family. I'll be a God to you and to your offspring, your seed, your children after you.

The third section is the naming of Sarah and the promise of a son to Sarah. Genesis 17:15-21 says *[15] And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. [16] I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." [17] Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" [18] And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" [19] God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. [20] As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. [21] But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year."*

So now He changes Sarah's name to match the change of Abraham's name and He promises a son through Sarah who will be 91 when this child is born. Abraham will be 100 when this child is born and he falls down laughing. Then God tells Abraham his son's name will be Isaac and in Hebrew Isaac means laughter. Abraham is laughing and the laughter of God fulfilling His promises is now starting to permeate this home. The last section of this chapter is the obedience of Abraham as he does what God commands him.

Genesis 17:22-27 says *[22] When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. [23] Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those*

born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. [24] Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. [25] And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. [26] That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. [27] And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

At this point I want to take these promises and help you understand the unity of the Bible and the unfolding of the covenant of grace. I want you to understand the necessity of interpreting the Old from the New. Notice what is said in this Michael Card song *El Shaddai*; "Through the years you made it clear, That the time of Christ was near, Through the people failed to see, What Messiah ought to be, Though your word contained the plan, They just could not understand..." The New Covenant is the key. The New Testament is the key to now look back and reveal what is concealed.

So when this Abrahamic covenant comes we see all these things that were promised to him. Notice what is promised to him. He is promised a seed or an offspring from which will come a nation. He is promised a son and the birth will be through Sarah. He is promised a sign of the covenant. He is promised that kings are going to come to him and he is promised a land as an everlasting possession. What do these things fully mean? I have outlined for you some things that will teach you more than just Bible stories as you study the Old Testament and more than just moralistic lessons. I want you to see Jesus. I want you to see Him in Genesis and all the Prophets. So let's just start by taking a brief overview of it.

First, comes the promise or the prophecy. Then will come the immediate fulfillment, the redemptive fulfillment, the transitional fulfillment and then comes the ultimate fulfillment. Let me give you an example. In the Passover God says I'm going to give you a sign of the covenant that will refresh you each year. The immediate fulfillment was the Passover. The redemptive fulfillment is Christ as your Passover. Christ is the One who protects His people with His blood and the wrath of God passes over because it came upon Christ. I Corinthians 5:7 says *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*. Then we have a transitional fulfillment. He renews that covenant meal and gives us a New Covenant meal, the Lord's Supper. The ultimate fulfillment is the table with the Lord in heaven, the marriage feast with the Lamb. All of that unfolds systematically.

So let's take a look at some things that are mentioned in the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17. God told him He would give him an offspring, a seed and from that would come a nation. The immediate fulfillment of that is Isaac. Isaac is the seed. He is the one that will be born. When Isaac is born from Isaac will come this nation that is promised. That nation will in fact give birth to multiple nations but from the seed will come a nation that cannot be counted that is enumerable. The immediate fulfillment is Isaac and through Isaac comes Israel.

Where is the redemptive fulfillment? Isaac isn't the seed. Christ is the Seed that will bring the victory of the covenant of grace. I want to show you how

the New Testament treats this. We could turn to a lot of passages but I just want to look at Galatians. In Galatians 3 this very Genesis 17 text is quoted. Galatians 3:16 says, *Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.* Christ is the fulfillment of that offspring. It is the very text we are studying that is quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:16.

In other words, Jesus the Author of Scripture is telling you that He is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, not Isaac. Isaac was the immediate fulfillment. The redemptive fulfillment in the covenant is Him. What nation will come from Him? It is His church, His people, all believers become the children of Abraham if you're in Christ. Now let's look at Galatians 3:28-29 which says *28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29) And if you are Christ's, then you (ya'll) are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

So the promise to Abraham for a seed is fulfilled immediately with Isaac and the result is Israel. It's fulfilled redemptively in Christ who is the Seed and the result in the transitional fulfillment is the church. Then it will be fulfilled in finality in the new heavens and the new earth as the church comes forward triumphant in Jesus Christ. It is the Nation with all the nations having been plundered with the Gospel and have been brought into eternity. So that is the seed and the nation.

What about the son who was promised who was Isaac and his birth? The immediate fulfillment is Isaac in a miraculous birth with Sarah who is 91 years old and having conceived with a 100 year old man. That is a miracle. That was not Providence that was a miracle. That is supernatural. Isaac is pointing to Christ who will come through more than a miraculous birth. He will come through a unique birth, a virgin birth for the woman will have a seed. Then the result of Him is His people. All of you are walking miracles. It is the new birth. You were dead in your sins and now you have been brought to Christ. Ultimately which is found in Romans 8 and 9 the whole earth is now in the pangs of birth waiting to be delivered into the regeneration of the new heavens and the new earth. The Lord is going to bring it all and birth it into a new creation with His sons and daughters.

Then we have the sign of circumcision. The sign of the covenant is promise. The immediate fulfillment is circumcision. The book of Colossians, Galatians and Hebrews tell us that Christ is our Circumcision. He cuts out our old heart and nailed it to the cross. He cuts out our sin record, nailed it to the cross also and paid for it. So Christ is our Circumcision. That's why it is everlasting. It is everlasting fulfilled in Christ. The transition is Colossians 2:11-14 where Jesus replaces the bloody sign of circumcision with a new sign of baptism. Then the people of God will be brought forth into the glorification in which the circumcised of heart and the baptism of the Spirit will be brought into eternity. Those whom He began a good work in He will fulfill to the day of Christ Jesus.

There is the promise of kings. Ishmael is a great study and we'll do that one. Twelve princes will come from Ishmael comparable to the twelve tribes that

will come from Isaac. Kings and nations will come from Ishmael and from Isaac but from Isaac the King that we are pointing to is not just the King for there are all kinds of kings that will come from Isaac, like David and Solomon. After them will come 27 more kings that will come from Isaac that will rule and reign in Israel but they are all pointing to the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. Then everyone that is in Christ is a prophet for we speak forth the Word of God. We are a priest for we serve the Lord. We are all kings for we are a royal nation of priests. The Bible says you are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. The ultimate fulfillment is when the new heavens and the new earth come and we will rule and reign with Christ forever. That is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of kings.

Then comes the land. After the people are dispersed from the land in the days Paul, Paul never says a word about the land having been restored to a geopolitical thing with Israel again. It is really interesting how the land is treated in the New Testament. What is our infallible interpreter? It is the New Testament of the Old Testament. What does the New Testament do with the land? It's interesting to note that in your Bible the fourth most used word in the Old Testament is land. What's interesting is that it is never used in the New Testament. The only time that passages are used that recall Old Testament passages of land are when Paul changes the word or Jesus changes the word.

Let me show you. When He promised Abraham the land of Canaan He did it. In the days of David to the days of Solomon the land of Canaan was given them and they had that land for their own to occupy, the land of nourishment, milk and honey. I know because the Bible describes the land in the days of Solomon that belong to Israel. God gave it to them. Nehemiah also describes the land when he brings the people back to rebuild the wall. Nehemiah 9:7-8 says *7) You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. 8) You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Gishgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.*

What is the redemptive fulfillment? The Gospels make a big point that Jesus is the Redeemer who has been brought to Zion, the land. He was born in Bethlehem. He comes out of Egypt. He is there in the land. He is raised in Nazareth and there He is in the land serving. In other words, the land becomes the land of the people of God because it is the land whereby the Redeemer is brought and the Redeemer becomes the land. Where is my milk and honey? Where is my nourishment? It's in Christ. Christ becomes the land just like He becomes the Rock in the wilderness and the Manna. He is the Land for the new Israel and the people of God. This is so beautiful!

If you were in the Old Covenant you would have gotten a piece of the land. Everyone in the covenant got a piece of the land and it was forever. If you ever had to give away your land to pay a debt at the end of seven years you would get it back. The land was yours and you belonged to the land. What is that a picture of? It is a picture of the believer in Christ. You belong to Christ and Christ belongs to you. All who know Christ are in Christ. They are nourished by the milk and honey by His grace and mercy.

Now in the transitional fulfillment because Christ is the land, the writers of the New Testament never use the word land of Canaan any longer for they now change the word to world and earth. Now this is my Father's world, go and make disciples. We're not driving out the Perizzite, Jebusite, and the Gergashite. We're driving out the people of the world with the weapons of the Spirit to bring them to Christ and the Kingdom of God. Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. My covenant people are to go everywhere so that the praise of God would cover the earth, even as the waters cover the sea.

Remember when Jesus talks about inheritance? In the Old Testament you inherit the land. In the New Testament Jesus says you'll inherit the earth. Let's look at Romans 4. Watch how Paul changes the words. Romans 4:13 says, *For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.* In the Genesis 17 passage it says Abraham would be heir of Canaan but when Paul gets on the other side of Jesus and Christ is the fulfillment of this, he won't use land. The new Israel, the people of Abraham, inherits the whole world. We are heirs to the world. This is my Father's world therefore ultimately the land will be the new heavens and the new earth.

I want to give you a couple of takeaways in closing. I know this requires so much more study but all I want you to do is to come to God's Word and study it in the way it has unfolded, with Old Testament concealed, the New Testament revealing so that you come to the New Testament understanding the Old Testament truths as they follow their trajectory into the New Testament. Let Christ in the New Testament be your Interpreter of the Old Testament so that you will understand it and when you do you will see that Christ is the Manna, the Bread of Life, the Rock that gives the water in which you'll never thirst again, the offerings, the burnt offering, the sacrifice, the wave offering and the Temple.

God destroyed the Solomonic Temple and Ezekiel describes what happens – the glory of the Lord has departed the temple. In Ezekiel the glory of the Lord comes upon some angels, some chariots and it goes out of the Eastern Gate up over the Mount of Olives. The glory of the Lord departed the temple out of the Eastern Gate up over the Mount of Olives. Then the second temple is built and they tell them not to get upset because the temple is so small. The glory in this temple will be greater than that in the Solomonic Temple yet when you go through the Old Testament the Shekinah glory of God never gets there. How did that get true? It happened the day that Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into that temple, the glory was greater than the Solomonic Temple.

He is not only the glory that filled that temple but He is the New Temple. John 1:14 says *The Word became flesh and dwelt (templed, tabernacle) among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* In John 2 Jesus said this temple will be torn down and in three days will be built back up. We know He wasn't talking about the temple that was torn down in 70 AD and was never to be built back up. After the resurrection His disciples knew He was speaking about Himself. He is the Temple. Then He cleanses it and walks out of it on Passion week through the Eastern Gate up over the Mount of Olives and the glory departed. Now the Temple is in the heavenly

Jerusalem and the earth is the Lord's and all that it contains. That's the way the Bible is written that we might see the majesty and glory of Christ. He is the Sabbath, the Manna, the Rock and the Ark. It is Christ that we are to see as we are looking through the Scriptures.

The second takeaway is the unity of God's Word. The Divine Author of Scripture has established an unmistakable pattern that Old Testament promises, types and symbols are redemptively fulfilled in Christ, transitionally fulfilled in His church, and ultimately fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth. This isn't fanciful reading spiritualization. This is the way the Divine Author tells you to interpret His Word. So when they say John the Baptist they had now seen Elijah. The literal fulfillment of Malachi that Elijah would come is John the Baptist. Literal means as the literature describes it. God in His Word is telling you how to interpret His Word. The New Testament reveals what the Old Testament conceals.

That brings me to the purpose of God's Word in conclusion. The purpose of God's Word is that you will constantly see Christ lifted up and Christ in all of His glory. You will always see Him there so whether it's the land it's Christ. When it's circumcision, it's Christ. When it's the Passover, it's Christ and all that thrills my soul is Jesus. Now I see Christ as my milk and my honey. He is my nourishment. He owns me and I own Him. He now sends me into all the earth. This is my Father's world.

Is He finished with Israel? I don't think so but it's not going back to the Old Covenant. Romans 14 tells you that the Gospel goes to Israel. It is this New Covenant that comes to Israel. So these branches that have been cut off that have been grafted into this glorious olive tree that's there so that we don't go back and make the land our Messiah but the land was where the Messiah came and now the Messiah becomes our land, our circumcision, our Passover, our everything and then we go into the world.

Let me bring this home for you with a story. 38 years ago a group at Briarwood embraced faith promise giving and said they would pray for missionaries, give to missionaries and a lady we gave to was named Betty Hudson Taylor. She went out of this church with the support of the people into the land, into the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. She met a Japanese man and led him to Christ. A few Sundays ago that man was here. He's not a Japanese man, he's a Christian man who is Japanese because we went to the land, the earth with the Gospel and the Lord is making a new nation of all the nations and Christ was exalted in all of His glory. He not only was a Japanese man that became a Christian man but he was also called into the ministry. He has been planting churches and had already planted 56 churches. Do you think that faith promise had a return? Christ is doing a work in all the world. Praise His Name! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Lord, I thank You that Your grace and mercy is so glorious. Would You allow us as we look at Your Word, not with fanciful ideas but with the Word of God guiding us, see

Jesus Christ that Christ would be lifted up? Would You allow us not to get caught up in the symbols, types and prophecies but to see that everything is yes and amen in Jesus Christ? May Christ be exalted. Draw men unto Yourself, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.