

The Promise to the Fathers  
Fulfilled in  
Christ's Resurrection

Radio

Acts 13.33

2018-01-14

(ed. note: This script was edited after the audio recording was made and varies slightly in some places, primarily to make the meaning clearer.)

People love to delve into mysteries and feel that they are privy to special information. This is no less true among the people of God and that natural inclination is often used by Satan to distract them from the simplicity which is in Christ. This tendency shows itself rather prominently in the desire to know the future. Therefore, among professed Christians there is a significant emphasis placed on the prophetic Scriptures and there are many famous preachers who have made themselves famous by claiming to have some special insight into the Scripture's prophetic passages.

I was raised in a system of theology called Dispensationalism but have not held that position since my years in Bible School. There is not sufficient time to give a full explanation of Dispensationalism, but it is most widely known for its belief that there will be a sort of two-fold second coming: first the rapture in which Christ will take all of the Christians out of the world. Next will come seven years of Tribulation followed the Second Coming of Christ to rule on a literal throne in Jerusalem for 1000 years. After this millennium, there will be a final judgment.

Essential to this system of theology is the belief that there are yet unfulfilled promises to Israel. It is said that these promises will be fulfilled only in that millennium age when the nation of Israel will

be restored to its promised land and the Lord Jesus, the Son of David, will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

But, when preaching to the synagogue in Antioch of Psidia, Paul made this remarkable statement to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles that were present on that Sabbath day. It is recorded for us in Acts 13.32, 33:

And we bring you the good news (that is, the gospel) that what God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.

Here, Paul is speaking to a group of Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh and he tells them that all they were to look for and hope for according to God's promise has been fulfilled by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Paul reduced all the individual promises made over the entire span of Jewish history to a single promise: the promise made to the fathers. And this single, all-encompassing promise was fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul repeats this concept in 2 Corinthians 1.20:

For however many promises of God there are, in Christ is the Yes.

Note that it does not say that in Christ are the yeses. It is a singular "yes" for it was a singular promise.

Every promise of God was a promise of Christ. Even the patriarchs understood this. In Hebrews 11.8-10 we find,

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents

with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Then in verses 13-16 we find,

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . .

Note that they were right in the land of promise, but did not consider it home. In fact, for these faithful believers in God's promise, there was nowhere on earth that was their home. Let us go on. Hebrews continues:

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.

There it is, as plain as day: not even Abraham thought the promise of God about a land would find fulfillment in the possession of mid-eastern real estate! Abraham saw Christ's day, said the Lord Jesus, and he rejoiced in what he saw. Abraham was not looking for land in this world. Even if he had come into possession of all the land that God showed him, he would not have been satisfied; he would not have considered it the fulfillment of what God had promised.

All of this is not for the purpose of disproving Dispensationalism. The harm of Dispensationalism is not so much in what it leads us

to believe but from what it distracts us from. Let me illustrate: Back in 2002, we had a house fire. Rather than repair our house, we tore it down and built another. In between tearing the old one down and building the new one, someone passed by the empty lot. This person commented to my wife, "I never knew what a beautiful view you had from your back yard." The beautiful view was there all along but the house had obstructed that view from everyone but us and our neighbors. Once the house was out of the way, everyone could see it.

It is the same with many of the theological structures we build in the mistaken notion that they enhance our view of the truth. Often, they OBSTRUCT the glory of God's truth in Christ. And so it is with Dispensationalism.

So the overall thesis of this message is, "Every promise God has made is Christ and every such promise was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. None of what the believer looks for and hopes for is in this world. We look for a heavenly country, a celestial city, heavenly treasure and a home in the presence of the Father. And all of that was purchased by the life and death of Christ and was guaranteed to all God's elect from every nation when God raise Christ from the dead. Indeed, Paul was correct when He said:

[God] has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ."

For the remainder of this message, I want to look at some of the major promises of the Old Testament and see how they were fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

After Adam sinned and the entire human race fell in him, God issued some curses and a promise. He promised that the Seed of

the woman would crush the head of the serpent. We know that the serpent was Satan, the accuser of the brethren. His hatred for Christ compels him to trouble the people of Christ by first dragging them into sin then accusing them before God. If he can make just one of the Lord's people to come under the Lord's condemnation for sin, then he shall have won the victory over Christ, for if even one of Christ's sheep can be lost, then none of His sheep can have any confidence of eternal life.

But Christ came into this world, born of a woman (the Seed of the woman) and born under the very law by which Satan tries to drag us into a sense of condemnation. As one born under the Law, Christ came under its obligations which He fulfilled perfectly and He earned all those blessings of life that are due unto the righteous. But, instead of grasping those blessings, He surrendered them and became a curse - willingly absorbing within Himself all that it means to be cursed by God. This came to its apex in the crucifixion. There, the serpent raised up in the hearts of wicked men and struck the heel of our Lord according to the word of the Lord given in The Garden of Eden. But God raised Him from the dead. And, when Christ was raised from the dead, He crushed the head of that Serpent. Never again can that wicked one touch the Lord or any of His people so as to bring them into God's disfavor! Satan's kingdom is overcome!

A couple of thousand years later, God made this promise to Abraham:

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

People have taken these promises in a strictly literal way and think that God has given to the natural descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a special protection in this world so much so that they believe that any nation which stands against the natural nation of Israel will come under God's curse. But it is not the Israel of Jacob that is so protected but the Israel of God. It is not all the descendents that are so protected, but one Seed, in particular, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul calls Christ the seed of Abraham, and it is written in Galatians:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He did not say, 'And to seeds,' in the plural; but in the singular, 'And to your seed,' which is Christ.

The promises of God to Abraham were not fulfilled in a large and prosperous nation of Israel. They were fulfilled in Christ when God raised Him from the dead. When Christ died and rose again, the Israel of God was in Him and they died and rose with Him. Christ rose in a new and spiritual kingdom and the church - the Israel of God - rose with Him. According to the book of Hebrews, these Old Testament words come from the mouth of Christ,

I and the children whom You have given me.

The innumerable seed of Abraham is not his natural descendents but his spiritual ones - all those in Christ - for, through Christ, it is we who believe in Him who are the seed of Abraham. And we possess the land! And this world is judged by how it treats us, the church of God. In the book of Revelation it is said on at least two occasions that the judgments which God sends on the earth are in response to the world's treatment of the church.

God promised David that there would always be one of his descendents on the throne of Israel. As Paul continued in Acts 13, he showed that the promise to David was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's resurrection was not simply His coming out of the tomb. In fact, the word translated "raised up" can mean more than simply being raised from death. It includes His being raised to the right hand of God to sit there until God makes all His enemies a footstool for His feet. God has set His king on His holy hill. Jesus Christ is enthroned as King over all God's creation: this Old Creation and the New Creation. The earth is our Lord's and everything in it. He is a King-priest who will never die, therefore He is able to save to the uttermost them who come to God by Him seeing He ever leaves to interceded for them.

Brothers and Sisters, there is nothing to look for other than Christ. All God's promises are "yes" in Him. Every promise of God is fulfilled in His being raised to the throne of heaven. And the only response we dare give is found in the Psalm that Paul quotes in Acts 13:

**Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way!**