

## Why Abraham Got Nothing Promised Session 5

Turn over to Galatians 3.

### Review:

**What's So New About the New Testament?** This series is ostensibly about NCT, but really it is about Jesus! Jesus is what makes the New Testament so new and wonderful.

The *1<sup>st</sup> London Baptist Confession of 1646* states, "Jesus Christ is . . . the mediator of the new and everlasting covenant of grace between God and man . . . the prophet, priest, and king of the Church of God for evermore."

New Covenant Theology is Jesus centered theology.

**Sinai Covenant:** The Bible records several covenants (testaments) between Jehovah God and various people. The covenant made between God and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai is called the Sinai Covenant or the Mosaic Covenant (Moses was the mediator). We've already seen that one impact of the New Covenant was to make the Sinai Covenant old and obsolete. There has been a change of law, from Moses to Christ and change of priesthood, from Levitical to Melchizedek.

**Abrahamic Covenant:** Another covenant was between God and Abraham. God promised Abraham three things: **Land, Offspring, and Blessing.**

**Critical Truth:** When God promised him offspring as numerous as there are stars, Abraham simply believed what God told him. He responded in faith.

ESV **Genesis 15:5-6** [God brought Abraham outside and said] "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

The truth of justification by faith runs straight through from Genesis to Revelation. Thus the New Testament states:

ESV **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**What's So New About The New Testament?** The initial physical fulfillments of God's promises to Abraham (land, offspring, blessing) were like shadows compared to the ultimate substance fulfillments found in Jesus and the New Testament.

**Singular Offspring:** The word offspring can be either singular or plural without changing form. (The word seed is the same way. Burpee puts out a seed catalog not a seeds catalog.) The New Testament states that what God really promised Abraham was one particular ultimate offspring (singular) and that it was a prophecy about the coming of Jesus, Abraham's ultimate descendant.

ESV **Galatians 3:16** . . . 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.

**Shadow/Substance (Jesus):** Abraham's son Isaac was the shadow; Jesus is the substance. Jesus is the true Offspring.

**Plural Offspring:** God promised that from Abraham would come an entire nation of people, as numerous as the sands of the sea. We know those offspring as the ancient Israelites. As regards the plural aspect of the word offspring, the New Testament goes on to declare:

ESV **Galatians 3:28-29** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

**Shadow/Substance (Church):** Israel was the shadow, the church is the substance. The church is the true Israel.

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**Introduction:** Today we will uncover long hidden biblical treasures. We will explore the New Testament substance fulfillment of the Promised Blessing Promise and the New Testament fulfillment of the Promised Land.

## The Blessing Promise

*Turn over to Galatians 3*

**\*\*\*\*1. Let's review the blessing part of God's promise. Who did God promise to bless besides Abraham (Ge 12:2-3)? Compare 22:18, 26:4.**

ESV **Genesis 12:2-3** . . . I will bless you and make your name great . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The blessing promise involved not only blessing Abraham personally but also promised a blessing to all the families of the earth. This theme is repeated throughout Genesis:

ESV **Genesis 22:18** . . . in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed . . .

ESV **Genesis 26:4** . . . in your [Isaac's] offspring [Jesus] all the nations of the earth [Gentiles] shall be blessed.

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**\*\*\*\*2. What problem plagued the Galatian churches (Ga 3:1-6)?** They had foolishly allowed themselves to become bewitched concerning works of the law versus faith as regards salvation.

**3. What truth about Abraham did Paul bring out in verse 6?** Abraham, father of the Jews, received righteousness by faith.

Immediately before this Paul had written:

ESV **Galatians 2:21** . . . if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

**Gospel:** *When you die and stand outside the Pearly Gates and Saint Peter asks why he should let you in, what will you say?* One man said he should be let in because he was an ambulance driver and had saved many people. Others have said because they tried to keep the Ten Commandments. Some think themselves to have been good people. Another said he was in the army and had served his time in Hell. If forgiveness is based on works, Christ died for nothing.

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**\*\*\*\*4. God promised to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham. According to Galatians 3:7-9 how the Promised Blessing been fulfilled?** God's promise to bless all nations in Abraham was fulfilled in the blessing of justification by faith, a blessing offered to Gentiles. This blessing was made possible through the ultimate descendant's (Jesus') death on the cross.

**5. Based on 3:7, who are the sons of Abraham?** Anyone with faith in Jesus is a son of Abraham. That's why NCT holds that the church is the true Israel. This is not replacement theology, it is fulfillment theology. Really, there is nothing to replace. God's promises to ethnic Israel were only and ever to those within ethnic Israel who also had the faith of Abraham.

**Shadow/Substance (Church):** Physical Israel was a shadow of the true Israel.

**In 3:8, how was the Gospel preached beforehand in the saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed"?** The Gospel was found in prototype form in God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham's offspring Jesus. The blessing is that just as Abraham was saved by faith, so also Gentiles could be saved by faith (apart from the Law).

**Shadow/Substance (Gospel):** The things of the Hebrew Scriptures are shadows of the substance we have in Christ. The Blessing Promise was a shadow of the Gospel.

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\*\*\*\*6. **What is true of all who rely on works of law (Ga 3:10-14)?** All who rely on works of law to be justified are under the curse of the law.

**Shadow/Substance (Hell):** The curses of the Book of the Law are shadows of a much more terrible reality: the fires of hell.

7. **According to 3:13, how did Jesus save people from the curse of the law?** Christ became a curse for us, in our place. Jesus took the curse so we get the blessing (De 21:23).

**Substitutionary Atonement:** Jesus' death on the cross atoned for our sins. He died as our substitute. *The 1<sup>st</sup> London Baptist Confession of 1646* says, “. . . Christ . . . hath . . . put away sin by . . . offering . . . Himself a sacrifice for sin, by which He hath fully finished and suffered all things God required for the salvation of His elect, and removed all rites and shadows . . .” (Insight: the shadows are have been removed!).

8. **According to 3:14, how does the blessing of Abraham come to the Gentiles?** *See also Acts 3:24-26.* The blessing comes in through faith in Christ.

ESV **Acts 3:24-26** [Peter evangelizing the Jews] . . . You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant [Jesus], sent him to you first [ethnic Israel], to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

The essence of the blessing is to be turned from our wickedness. Repentance and faith are opposite sides of the same coin.

**Summary:** The Promised Blessing to all nations was fulfilled in the Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection preached to all nations offering justification by faith apart from the Law.

### The Promised Land

Turn to Genesis 15. We've already seen where God promised Abraham Land, Offspring and Blessing (Ge 12). Now let's examine the actual covenant and zero in specifically on the Land Promise (Ge 15).

## The Covenant Cut

\*\*\*\*What did God tell Abram to do in Genesis 15:7-11?

**9. Why did God want Abram to cut these animals in half and then arrange the halves opposite each other (15:9-11)?** See *Jeremiah 34:18-19*. Though the meaning of all this is obscure to society today, it was quite common then. Archaeology has revealed that during Abram's lifetime, this is the way that treaties or covenants were made between kings. The technical term describing the event was that they would "cut a covenant", which points to the ancient rite of cutting an animal as part of a ritual used in the forming of the covenant. The animal was slaughtered and cut into two or three parts (NBD, p. 240). This may be the origin of our phrase, "Let's cut a deal".

As seen in *Jeremiah 34:18-19*, the two parties of the covenant then passed between the pieces of the animals. The symbolism apparently was that if either party broke the covenant, then he would be killed just like the animals had been (Aalders, p. 296).

ESV **Jeremiah 34:18-19** . . . the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts . . .

**Significant:** According to the normal treaty custom of the day, Abraham expected God to somehow appear and walk through the pieces along with Abraham.

**10. Why is the information contained in Genesis 15:11 significant?** Perhaps it is included to indicate that a lengthy amount of time passed after Abram cut the animals. Abraham obviously had to wait a long time. Since 15:5 occurred at night ("number the stars"), perhaps Abram got up early the next morning to prepare the animals, and then waited patiently all day (birds of prey do not fly at night) for God to appear. However, it was not until after sundown that God acted, 15:17.

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\*\*\*\***11. According to Genesis 15:12, what happened to Abram as the sun was setting?** A deep sleep fell on Abram (15:12a). It is an important fact that Abraham was out cold. He was You've heard of Rip Van Winkle: this is Abraham Van Winkle.

**Teacher's Note:** Skip the rest of the paragraph (15:13-15) and go to 15:17-18.

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\*\*\*\***What did God promise in this covenant (Ge 15:17-21)?** God promised Abraham Middle Eastern real estate, roughly the land possessed by modern Israel.

**12. How did the LORD ratify this covenant (Ge 15:17-18)?** God ratified this covenant by walking alone between the pieces.

**Note:** We are not told why God appeared in the form of a smoking oven. Perhaps it was a precursor to later leading Israel in a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day.

**13. What was Abram doing during all this (Ge 15:17-18)?** *See 15:12.* Abraham was sleeping. This necessarily meant that he did not walk between the pieces as would normally have been the custom.

**14. What is the significance of the smoking oven passing between the pieces alone (Ge 15:17-21)?** *See Jeremiah 34:18-19, Galatians 3:16-18.* Normally both parties of a covenant passed between the pieces. The oven's solo movement between the pieces suggests this is a one-sided covenant. God alone is responsible for the fulfillment of the promises of the covenant.

**Test: Is this covenant conditional or unconditional (Ge 15:17-21)? Why?** *See Galatians 3:15-18.* It is unconditional since its fulfillment is guaranteed by God. Abram slept through its ratification.

**Illustration:** Though Abraham was a man of faith, he kept doing dumb things that would have made the promises null and void if their fulfillment depended on Abraham. For example, he later moved out of the Promised Land and down to Egypt and twice tried to give away his wife to save his life!

**Law versus Promise:** The Abrahamic covenant is based on promise, not law. Note the emphasis on promise versus law in Galatians 3:16-18.

ESV **Galatians 3:16-18** . . . promises were made to Abraham . . . the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

**Shadow/Substance (The New Testament):** God's covenant with Abraham is very much like the New Covenant in that both are unilateral covenants, both are based on promise (and not law), both are totally dependent on God's performance (not ours). I would not trust the best five minutes I ever had to get me into heaven.

**Shadow/Substance (Christ's Death):** The Abrahamic Covenant was unilateral; God took all the responsibility on Himself. Normally if one party failed, the other could do to him as had been done to the animals. Abraham clearly would have failed to live up to the covenant, just as we would have failed. In a sense, since God is totally responsible, He became a man and died in Abraham's place as payment for Abraham's failure.

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**\*\*\*\*15. What does Joshua 21:43 reveal about the Promised Land?** Israel got all the land God promised. We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. The land promise was fulfilled. Remember this later (it is very significant).

ESV **Joshua 21:43** Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there.

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*Turn to Hebrews 11.*

**16. According to Hebrews 11:8-10, why did Abraham live in tents as in a foreign land even after he moved to the Promised Land?** Abraham was looking for something far more significant than Middle Eastern real estate. The difference between what Abraham was promised and what he got was like living in a foreign country. He understood the Promised Land was just a shadow of a much greater spiritual reality. He longed for a heavenly city, a supernatural city.

**Application:** Like Abraham, this world is not really our home. We should not get too worked up over politics or nationalism.

ESV **Philippians 3:20** . . . our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

**Application:** We need to learn from Abraham's example: Everything in the Hebrew Scriptures is just a shadow of the reality we have in Christ and the New Testament.

**17. What is this city with foundations that has God as its designer and builder (11:10)?** See 12:18-24, 13:14 and Revelation 3:12, 21:2. Abraham was looking for what we know as the Heavenly Jerusalem or the New Jerusalem.

**Read Hebrews 12:18-24.**

We have come to Mt Zion, not Mt. Sinai. We have come to the Heavenly Jerusalem not the earthly Jerusalem. We have to Jesus and the New Covenant, not Moses and the Old Covenant.

**Read Hebrews 13:14. What city to come do we seek?**

ESV **Revelation 21:2-3** I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

The church already is the bride of Christ. In one sense this is another way of describing the church. The church exists right now on earth. But in the future the church will be exalted as Christ's bride upon His return at the marriage banquet of the Lamb. This city is both now and not yet.

**Shadow/Substance (Heaven):** The Promised Land was a shadow of both the church and heaven, our eternal home.

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*Go back to Hebrews 11*

**\*\*\*\*18. What does the Promised Land represent (11:13-16)?** It represents a heavenly county.

**19. This is really huge: What does 11:13 declare about the Promised Land? See 11:39-40.** It boldly states that he did take possession of what was really promised; he did not live to the land promise fulfilled!

**ESV Hebrews 11:39-40** And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

**20. How many of God's promises did Abraham not live to see fulfilled (11:13)?** None of them! Although they saw the initial shadow fulfillments of God's promises, they knew there was something better and died in faith awaiting it: Jesus and the New Covenant.

The Old Testament declares they got it, that the promises were fulfilled, but the New Testament declares they didn't get what was promised, so great is the difference between shadow and substance.

**21. Based on 11:14-16 what were these people really looking for? See 2 Peter 3:13.** They were seeking a heavenly country. Just as the tabernacle was a copy of heavenly reality, so too the Promised Land was only a type, only a shadow, only a picture of the true, the real, the ultimate heavenly country.

**ESV 2 Peter 3:13** . . . according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

**Summary:** The Promised Land was a shadow of heaven.

### **So What?**

So many Christians never understand this, never put this all together.

**22. What's So New About the New Testament?** God promised Abraham land, offspring and blessing. The initial **land** was Canaan, the initial **people** were ethnic Israel and the initial **blessing** was property, protection and a special status as God's unique people.



**Shadow/Substance:** These early fulfillments were simply shadows and types of the real ultimate substance fulfillments found in the New Testament. The true Offspring was the Lord **Jesus**. The true blessing was **justification by faith**, made possible by Jesus' death on the cross. The true land is our **heavenly country**.

**Shadow/Substance:** The New Testament cancelled the Old Testament, but it is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

**New Week:** *What impact did the substance fulfillments of the New Testament have on the shadow fulfillments of the Abrahamic Covenant? For example, does the shadow Promised Land still belong to the physical descendants of Abraham? Hint: The 1<sup>st</sup> London Baptist Confession of 1646 says, “. . . Christ . . . hath . . . put away sin by . . . offering . . . Himself a sacrifice for sin, by which He hath fully finished and suffered all things God required for the salvation of His elect, and removed all rites and shadows . . .” (Insight: the shadows have been removed!).*

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