

# God's Promises to Abraham

By Everett Hardin

God made three important promises to Abraham. *“Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,”* Genesis 12:1-3.

Quite frequently world events provide an occasion for much speculation with respect to the Jews, Jerusalem and Bible prophecy. This is the result of wide-spread notions among religious people that the Jews are yet, in some special sense, the chosen people of God, and that these promises are yet to be fulfilled. Well, what is the hope of the fleshly Jew today? Is he entitled to an earthly kingdom prophetically yet unfulfilled?

## The Nation Promise

God promised to make Abraham a great nation, innumerable as *“the stars of the heaven,”* and *“the sand which is upon the seashore,”* Gen. 22:17. As a result of a famine in the land of Canaan, the family of Jacob (Israel) went down into the land of Egypt and developed into a mighty nation. Solomon declared that this promise was fulfilled in his day. *“Now O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude,”* 2 Chron. 1:9. I Kings 4:2 says, *“Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude...”*

## The Land Promise

*“And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land,”* Gen. 12:7. God promised to give Abraham and his descendants the land and described its borders, *“Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates,”* Gen. 15:18.

Jacob (a grandson of Abraham) and his family, went down into the land of Egypt to escape death in a seven year famine in the land of Canaan. There they remained and eventually found themselves in bondage or slavery in the government of the land. God then raised up Moses, who under God's direction led these people out of Egypt. After wandering forty years in the wilderness, because of unbelief, they were finally led to the east bank of the Jordan River. Here, Moses, by reason of death, was removed as their leader. God selected Joshua to succeed Moses. Joshua led Israel into this land and helped them conquer what God had promised.

Joshua said, *“And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it and dwelt therein... There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass,”* Joshua 21:43-45. Concerning God's promise Joshua said, *“all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof,”* Joshua 23:14. Solomon reigned over all the land with the dimensions God had promised. *“And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the border of Egypt,”* I Kings 4:21. So we can readily see that God kept this promise unto Abraham.

## The Restoration Promise

Although God had brought the Israelites from Egypt and firmly established them in the promised land, they did not obey the system of law He gave them. Nehemiah speaks of this condition, *“Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew the prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee,”* Neh. 9:2,6.

About 700 B.C., the prophet Isaiah foretold the fall of Israel as a nation to the Babylonians. He said they would be taken captive and exiled, but he also foretold their return. Isaiah gave the name of the King of Persia, saying Cyrus would allow the Jews to return to their own land; to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, Isaiah 44:28.

About 626 B.C. Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Jerusalem, urging the Jews to surrender the city to the king of Babylon and promised that they would someday return, Jer. 16:15. However, Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would never again occupy the land as they once had, but rather would be like a broken vessel, *“that cannot be made whole again,”* Jer. 19:11-12.

Later, after Jerusalem had fallen and the people were carried to exile in Babylon, God spoke through Ezekiel promising: *“I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all the countries, and bring you into your own land,”* Ezek. 36:24. Most of the scriptures being quoted about Israel’s return to the land were fulfilled when Israel returned from Babylonian captivity (606-536 B.C.).

By carefully reading 2 Chron. 36:11-12, we can easily learn that God said they would be returned to the land at the end of 70 years. This simply means that 70 years after Jerusalem was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar, and the people taken to Babylon, God would cause them to be released from captivity and returned to their own land. When they returned they would rebuild the city and the temple. When the 70 years were completed God said in verse 20, *“And them that escaped from the sword carried He away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.”*

Then in verses 22-23, we are told of the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia, who in the first year of his reign, made a proclamation that the Jews could return to their land and rebuild the capital city, Jerusalem and the temple. This thing was done. The record of it is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Men today are preaching that the promise is on the verge of being fulfilled...that 70 years did not mean 70 years at all, and God has yet to keep the promise He said He would fulfill 70 years later.

### **The Spiritual Seed Promise**

God told Abram, *“In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,”* Gen. 12:3. Paul very forcefully proclaims the spiritual meaning of the promise God made to Abraham, saying, *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise,”* Gal. 3:26-29. Paul was not speaking of a temporal, earthly kingdom as he had once believed. He was not speaking of Christ’s coming and reigning in a national state. Paul was not speaking of a fleshly chosen race who would be sole heirs of the promise. Those who had been baptized into Christ had put on Christ. In Him there is no distinction made between the various classifications mentioned as far as their spiritual relationship to the Lord is concerned.

The Jews are now as Gentiles in God’s sight. Hear Paul, *“For there is no difference between Jew and Greek,”* Rom. 10:12. God’s Jew (or Israel) today, then, is not of the flesh, but

of faith, the kind of faith possessed by Abraham. *“For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart,”* Rom. 2:28-29.

God fulfilled His promise to Abraham. The restoration promise was also fulfilled. The return of some of the Jews to Palestine today and the state of Israel has nothing to do with these promises. Today, Jews and Gentiles may be blessed alike through Christ. The Gospel of Christ is God’s power to save both Jew and Gentile, Rom. 1:16-17. The conversions in the book of Acts show that the same thing was required of both Jew and Gentile. There is nothing in the future in store for the Jews that is not promised to the Gentiles. Redemption is for all men of all nations, Matt. 28:18-20.

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