

Thursday Evening Bible Study

Series: **the End Times – Bible prophecy about future events and periods**

Teaching Summary for Week 10

The Kingdom and the Covenants

Part 2. The Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional, eternal, literal covenant made by the Lord to Abraham. It consists of promises concerning **his seed** (innumerable descendants, nations, kings, one seed), a **land grant** deeded to the nation that would come from his loins, and the **blessings** that would ultimately extend to all the nations of the world.

The significance of the Abrahamic covenant for Eschatology (end times)

The Abrahamic Covenant is the basis for the **entire covenant program** between God and His people.

Five aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant make it central to the **future events** of the end times:

1. The Abrahamic Covenant is **unconditional**: the promises are certain to occur.
2. The promises in the Abrahamic Covenant are **literal**.
3. The promises have not yet been fulfilled in their entirety. The fulfillment is in the **future**.
4. The Abrahamic Covenant is **eternal** in character.
5. The Abrahamic Covenant was made with a defined covenant people: **Israel**.

Eternal aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant include:

1. Israel is guaranteed a permanent **national existence**.
2. Israel is granted a perpetual title to the **promised land**.
3. Israel is certain to receive **material and spiritual blessing forever** through Christ.
4. **Gentile nations** will share in these permanent blessings.

The essential parts of the Abrahamic covenant- **the seed, the land, and the blessing** - are enlarged in subsequent covenants made with Israel. We will study each of these.

They include the **Palestinian Covenant** (land –final permanent restoration in the land of promise), the **Davidic Covenant** (seed – promises of a dynasty, nation, and throne), and the **New Covenant** (blessing – particularly Israel’s spiritual blessing and redemption) .

What are the implications of these facts?

The Abrahamic Covenant is an **unconditional** covenant made with **Israel**. It cannot be annulled, and it cannot be fulfilled by people other than the nation of Israel.

The seed promises and the land promises are made only to the nation of Israel: the **physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**.

Gen 17:6-8, 19; Psa 105:6-11

So the Abrahamic Covenant promises Israel a permanent existence as a nation. The Abrahamic Covenant promises Israel permanent possession of the promised land.

But never in her history has she fully possessed all the land promised in the covenant. She certainly has not possessed the complete land grant uninterrupted until now.

So Israel as a nation has a **future** when the seed and land promises will be fulfilled.

Note that it is "spiritual Israel" who will possess the land in the future millennium. Spiritual Israel is **NOT the church**. **Spiritual Israel** consists of the **physical descendants of Jacob** who also share in **the faith** of Abraham.

At that time when Israel will possess the land permanently, believing Gentiles (all the families of the earth) will receive a share of the blessings given to Israel.

In **Galatians 3:6-9**, the Gentile children of Abraham by faith fulfill the universal promised blessings, but not the national promises, which are only for the nation of Israel.

Finally, therefore, **the Church is NOT Israel**. Thus, the Church is NOT fulfilling Israel's seed and land promises.

Let's read **Romans 11** together.

Romans 11 says that God has taken Israel out of the place of blessing temporarily (until the fullness of Gentiles comes in), but will restore Israel to that place of blessing after His program for the Church is completed.

And all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant - seed, land, and blessing – will ultimately be fulfilled and inherited by a single Person – the pre-eminent Seed, **our Lord Jesus Christ**.

Gal 3:16

16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

The church is receiving the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant by virtue of **our union with Christ**.

Gal 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Part 3. The Palestinian Covenant

The Palestinian Covenant is an unconditional, eternal, literal covenant whereby the Lord **re-affirms the land promises** of the Abrahamic Covenant to the **nation of Israel**.

The nation of Israel had received **the Mosaic covenant** at Mount Sinai, but broke that conditional covenant again and again during their forty years in the wilderness.

The Palestinian covenant demonstrates that national failure does not nullify the agreement the Lord previously made in the Abrahamic Covenant. It is **unconditional** – though the time of fulfillment can be postponed as a result of disobedience.

Recall the land grant in the Abrahamic Covenant:

Gen 15:18-21

18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying,

*" To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:*

*19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite
and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the
Jebusite."*

The Palestinian covenant is established with the nation of Israel in the book of **Deuteronomy chapter 30 verses 1-10**. Let's read that together now.

Deu 30:1-10

*1 "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse
which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your
God has banished you, 2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your
heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,*

3 then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 " The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

6 "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. 7 " The Lord your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. 8 "And you shall again obey the Lord, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. 9 " Then the Lord your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; 10 if you obey the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.

The Palestinian covenant answers the question of **Israel's relation** to the **land** promises of the Abrahamic covenant in the face of **national failure** under the Mosaic Covenant.

Deut 5:1-3

Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them:

*"Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully. 2 "The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3 " The Lord **did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us**, with all those of us alive here today.*

The Mosaic covenant was a different covenant from the Abrahamic covenant. It was a conditional covenant and thus required terms of performance on the nation of Israel .

Recall that a conditional covenant is a proposal of God, wherein He promises, in a mutual compact with man, by the contingent formula **“IF YOU WILL”**, to grant special blessings to man provided he fulfills perfectly certain conditions, and to execute definite punishment in case of his failure.

So the fulfillment of the conditional Mosaic covenant depended on the recipient of the covenant – **Israel**.

*Let's read **Ex 19:1-8***

***if you will** indeed obey My voice and **keep** My covenant,
All the people answered together and said, "**All that the Lord has spoken we will do!**"
And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. (2way covenant)*

However, the generation of Israel that entered into the agreement of the Mosaic covenant failed and disobeyed the Lord, again and again.

*Let's now read **Heb 3:16-19***

And under the **Mosaic** Covenant, the blessings of the promised land were **conditional**, meaning Israel would receive them only as long as they were obedient.

*Let's next read **Num 14:20-34***

And then Deut 11:8-28

In the final chapters of the book of Deuteronomy, the nation of Israel faces a grave crisis. Their leader Moses will soon die, and his successor, Joshua, is an unproven leader. Moreover, they are poised to enter the promised land, but that land is teeming with enemies.

Their future appears very uncertain.

Is the land of Palestine still their possession?

Did the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant, a conditional covenant, set aside the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant?

Would Israel ever be able to live in this new land in peace and possess it permanently, given the presence of so many enemies there?

The Lord answered these questions for Israel by declaring the Palestinian covenant. It assured Israel that they would inherit and possess the land promised Abraham forever.

The importance of the Palestinian Covenant

The Palestinian covenant is important for what it promises directly to Israel:

1. It reaffirms to Israel that their title deed to the land of promise is rock solid.
2. It establishes the principle that unfaithfulness and even unbelief (things Israel fell into many times in their history from Abraham forward) cannot cancel the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.
3. The introduction of a conditional covenant under which Israel was then living could not set aside the original gracious promise that God had previously ordained. Paul makes this same argument **in Galatians 3:17**.
4. This covenant confirms and enlarges the land features of the Abrahamic covenant. Despite failure on Israel's part, the original promises will be fulfilled at a future time.

The provisions of the Palestinian Covenant

Let's read Deut 30:1-10 again.

The Palestinian covenant has seven major features:

1. The nation will be taken out of the land for its unfaithfulness (Deu 28:63-68; 30:1-3).
2. In the future, Israel will repent (Deu 28:63-68; 30:1-3).
3. Their Messiah will return (Deu 30:3-6).
4. Israel will be restored to the land (Deu 30:5).
5. Israel will be converted as a nation (Deu 30:4-8; Rom 11:26-27).
6. Israel's enemies will be judged (Deu 30:7).
7. The nation will then receive her full blessing (Deu 30:9).

Confirmation of the Palestinian Covenant

The Palestinian covenant is confirmed later on in Israel's history, when the nation was perhaps at her worst condition since the time of the Judges. We find this confirmation in the book of **Ezekiel, chapter 16**. Here are the highlights:

The Lord God reminded Israel that at her birth He watched over her and protected her (Eze 16:1-7).

He asked the nation to recall how He had made a covenant with her and made her into a beautiful bride (Eze 16:8-14).

Nevertheless, she played the harlot, embracing idolatry and giving her gifts to foreigners (Eze 16:15-34).

Therefore, the Lord gathered Israel's traditional enemies and handed her over to them for the slaughter. And he removed Israel from the land (Eze 16:35-52).

Yet, He did not abandon Israel forever. He will remember His covenant with her and forgive her for all of her sins. And He will make a new, everlasting covenant with Israel, and restore her to the land forever. (Eze 16:53-63).

Ezek 16:60-63

60 "Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. 61 "Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. 62 "Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, 63 so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done," the Lord God declares.

The character of the Palestinian covenant

There are at least four reasons why the Palestinian must be understood to be unconditional.

First, the Lord calls it an eternal covenant in Eze 16:60.

Second, it is an amplification of the Abrahamic covenant, which is itself unconditional.

Third, the Lord promises that He will Himself perform the entire conversion of the nation of Israel which must occur before the covenant is fulfilled (Deu 30:6; Eze 11:16-21; Hos 2:14-23; Rom 11:26-27 all state this).

Fourth, portions of this covenant have already been fulfilled literally. Israel has been sent into exile for her apostasy several times in her history. She has also been restored to her land afterwards, except for the most recent time in 70 AD. Now she awaits her final restoration to the entire promised land, where she will dwell in peace and prosperity forever.

In addition, the Lord has judged her enemies several times in her history also.

These partial, literal fulfillments of the Palestinian covenant foreshadow the future literal fulfillment of the entire covenant.

It could perhaps be argued that statements in Deu 30:1-3 make this a conditional covenant.

Deut 30:1-3

*1 "So it shall be **when** all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 **then** the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. 4*

However, the only thing that hangs in the balance here is the timing of its fulfillment. The covenant will be fulfilled when the nation is finally converted. And it's "when" and "will", not if. And the Lord is the one who promises to bring about this conversion:

Deut 30:6

Moreover **the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants**, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Deut 30:8

*8 "And **you shall** again obey the Lord, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.*

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