The Second Coming – The Covenant with Abraham  
The Purpose of God

This part of the study is going to help us answer the question: was the original purpose of God the Physical Nation of Israel or was it the Church? We are going to do that by looking at the covenant with Abraham.

The Promise to Abraham – Descendants and Land

Gen 12:1-3  
Abraham here was promised by God that he would be a great nation and that he would be blessed. He was also promised that “All” the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Gen 13:14-16  
Here we see that Abraham was promised the land of Israel for his descendants forever.

Gen 17:1-8  
Here we see that Abraham was given a covenant with God. He would be the father of a multitude of nations. And the folks from all those nations would be given the land of their sojournings as an everlasting possession. Notice these verses we are looking at – none of them say anything about one nation – they all mention the word nations or all people.

Gen 18:17-18  
So again all nations are going to be blessed through Abraham. That is a very un-Jewish thing to write. According to the Jews they are the chosen people. So if God’s focus was going to be totally on the Jews, this verse would say “all the Jews would be blessed.”

Gen 22:16-18  
Since Abraham was going to go ahead and sacrifice Isaac (even though all his hopes for a mighty nation were riding on him, all families of earth will be blessed through him (or through his seed).

Gen 26:3-5  
Isaac was given the same promise that his dad had received – many descendants, the land, all peoples blessed – which would make sense.

Gen 28:12-15  
Again in the vision of Jacob’s ladder, Jacob was promised the many descendants and the land as well. He was also promised that all families of the earth would be blessed through him.

So we have Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all promised many descendants, a promised land and that through them all families of the earth would be blessed. What does the New Testament have to say about this?
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Galatians 3:6
Now if you check you center column references you can tell that Paul is directly quoting the Old Testament. And the quote happens to come from Genesis 15 and it happens to be very important to the rest of this study.

The Christian Covenant

Genesis 15:2-6
Here we see where righteousness was reckoned to Abraham. And also we see that the promise is reiterated that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

Genesis 15:7-11
The promise of the land is given to Abraham again. Then he is told to get some animals together and to cut them into pieces. This was the way back then that people used to enter into a covenant with each other (Jeremiah 34:18-19). It was called a blood covenant. So people would cut up the animals and then place the pieces in two lines leading up to an altar and then the two parties would walk arm in arm between the pieces. It was called a blood covenant because if either side broke the covenant, it would sometimes require death as the consequence of breaking it.

Genesis 15:12-16
Abraham is now told that he will be buried at a ripe old age and that he will have many descendants. He is also told that they would be slaves in Egypt and that the nations that did that to them would be punished. He is also promised that in the fourth generation they would return to the land.

Genesis 15:17-21
So, Abraham was scaring away birds and other predators while waiting to walk between the pieces with God because he thought he was going to be entering into a covenant with God. But while in a trance he watches a flaming torch and boiling pot pass between the pieces. Abraham did not get to walk between the pieces.

In Genesis 15, as we saw iterated elsewhere, God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (literally, “his seed”) the land of Canaan forever. Now if you only look at the book of Genesis, this looks like a promise given to the nation of Israel and a promise to be fulfilled physically. But again, as we should always do, let’s see what the New Testament has to say about this.

What does the New Testament say about this promise?

Galatians 3:15-17
Paul makes it clear in Galatians 3:15 that once a covenant is set forth you can’t make changes to it. So if you can’t make changes to a covenant ratified by men, do you think
you are going to be able to change a covenant ratified by God? So God has bound Himself to a contract and He is going to keep it. Paul is comparing the covenant with Abraham (which was given for the last time around 1876 BC to Jacob) to the Ten Commandments which were given on Mt. Sinai some 430 years later.

Paul is letting us know in verse 16 that God when he mentioned seeds to Abraham was not referring to many, but One (his seed) that is Christ. So God was not referring to the nation of Israel but Jesus Christ. “And in your seed, all nations of earth will be blessed” (Genesis 22:18). So the covenant was not with God and Abraham (or the physical nation of Israel), the covenant was actually with God and Jesus Christ. And that covenant is far superior to the Old Covenant that came 430 years later. So, the covenant that was given in Genesis 15 is the Christian Covenant.

**Galatians 3:18-19**

Paul makes it clear in these verses that the covenant made with Abraham (or his seed) was given long before the Law. The Law was added as a separate legal document and it was added to highlight the sins of men so that they would recognize their need for a savior. And then the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. The Law was given to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus Christ and He was the seed that was to come – the one to whom the promise had been given. And there was no comparison between the importance or glory of the two covenants. So it is clear from this that the covenant which God made with Abraham was the Christian covenant – i.e. a covenant between God and Christ. That is why there is the vision of the flaming torch and smoking oven that passed between the pieces in Genesis 15. So the Law was merely a means of preserving a measure of faith until the time was right for Jesus to come.

**Galatians 3:20-21**

So the Law was never going to be able to impart life. The Law had a huge problem – It cannot produce righteousness and thus the Law does not allow people to be able to produce the righteousness required to keep it.

- Galatians 3:10 - If you did not keep all things as written in the law – you would be condemned as guilty by that same law. Law is always a cause and effect relationship. The simple rule is – you break the law, you die, spiritually.

But the New Covenant which is based on the promise would be able to produce a people who could fulfill the requirement of the Law (Romans 8:4). It would be able to produce a people who could keep it.

**Galatians 3:26-29**

So Christians (those that have been immersed into and clothed with Christ) are now true descendants of Abraham and the heirs according to promise. We are the spiritual descendants and not physical descendants. There are no longer spiritual differences between Jew and Gentile, Men and Women, Slave or Free Man – we are all one in Christ Jesus and free to eat at His table together.
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The Promised Land

So back to the verses from Genesis – these verses are letting us know that the land would be given to the descendants of Abraham. Did the Jews ever possess this land they were promised? If you read the pre-millennial teachers, they will say these prophecies have never been fulfilled. Now, I wonder if we can find a verse in the scripture that says this prophecy has been fulfilled. How many of these verses should be sufficient to prove the point? I would think one verse should be enough to prove our point.

Joshua 21:41-43
Now these verses appear to say that the Jews possessed the land that God promised them. However, let’s see what a prophecy expert would have to say about this.

From The Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary, Tim Lahaye, Ed Hindson, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon - page 67 as a commentary on this verse, we read:

“Upon comparison with other passages, it becomes clear interpretively that the author of Joshua is making use of the well-known Hebrew idiom of a part standing for the whole. Accordingly, although Joshua only conquered key regional centers through the entirety of Canaan, as an idealized concluding statement it can be summarized as if he had taken the whole.”

Now it does not matter how Lahaye and others want to spin this verse and its meaning. The scripture says “the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it.” (Joshua 21:43). So they can claim that the Jews did not possess the land but the scripture says they did possess it – even though there were some Gentile groups there. The Holy Spirit says “Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.” (Joshua 21:45). Who knows more about whether a prophecy was fulfilled - Lahaye or the Holy Spirit? Who knows more about the history of the world – J Dwight Pentecost or the Living Word? Now which one of us do you think is taking this verse literally? And which one of us is trying to take it figuratively?

And later on that same page, Lahaye and Hindson make the following statement:
“Even under the monarchy’s greatest territorial hegemony, under kings David and Solomon, the scriptural account makes clear that much of the Gentile regions were mere tributary nations, under Israel’s military control only, not incorporated into Israel proper”

Now, the pre-millennial teachers do have a tendency to quote Deuteronomy 7:22 which says that “the LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you.” (Deuteronomy 7:22). So they say that Israel never fully possessed the land because they still had all these other nations amongst them. Now the only problem is – this argument does not work either.
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- Acts 13:18-19 – So the Lord finally drove out all 7 nations around 995 BC (1446 BC – 450 years) or so. So at the time of David and Solomon, all of the nations had been driven from the land of Israel.

I Kings 4:21-24

These verses make it clear that Israel did possess the land that was promised. This verse was written while Solomon was king and thus all 7 nations had been driven out of the land. And according to these verses, Israel possessed all the land that was promised to Abraham in Genesis 15. But since this would wreck the premillennial theory, there authors have to say, that Israel never possessed that whole land of Israel that was promised. (See Chart on Page 7).

So Pre-millennialists can try to weasel there way out of this if they want – but God says they possessed the land they were promised and that all of God’s promises were fulfilled. Now I happen to believe that statement – that all promises were fulfilled.

Nehemiah 9:7-8

This scripture is very clear that the land promise to the Israelites have been clearly fulfilled according to scripture. So sometimes Pre-millennialists will deny what the scriptures say if they think it rejects their theology.

Conditional Land Covenant

The thing we need to keep in mind is that this land promise to Israel was conditional. They were given the land but if they broke, the covenant, they would lose it. It is mentioned over and over again in the scripture.

Joshua 23:11-16

So all of the prophecies have been fulfilled but they are conditional as well. Due to the fact of the Israelites intermarrying with the Gentiles and so forth, eventually paganism would run rampant and they would be taken out of their land.

Other verses on the conditional covenant of the land

Deuteronomy 30:16-20
I Kings 9:6-9
II Kings 21:8-9

Here are some Extras that we will not cover in class:

Genesis 17:8, 14
Exodus 19:5
Numbers 14:30
Deuteronomy 4:25-26
Deuteronomy 7:12-13
Deuteronomy 11:16-17
Ezra 9:12, 14
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Jeremiah 7:3-6
Jeremiah 44:22
Lamentations 1:10

Abraham’s Real Promised Land

So what about this land that Abraham was looking for. Does the scripture say that Abraham was looking for the land of Canaan? Is that what was going to make him the father of the faithful? So what about the land which was promised to Abraham and his seed?

Hebrews 11:8-10
Notice here that Abraham obeyed when he was called by going out to the land of promise. It was Canaan where Abraham ended up. Abraham lived there as an alien and a stranger in that land. But is that the land he was ultimately looking for? Verse 10 says that he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose builder and architect is God. Which cities on earth did God build? The answer to that is of course none. So Abraham was looking for a city that was not of this earth.

Hebrews 11:12-16
Notice here that Abraham was not seeking a country of his own. For this is clear that if you are seeking a country of your own, you can always return to your previous country. But as it is, “Abraham desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one.” So Abraham was not searching for the land of Canaan but heaven. Abraham had a heavenly focus. And thus God said “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.”

So Christians are now the faithful and Abraham is known as the “father of the faithful.” Abraham obeyed God in all things. In hope against hope he believed. And he was fully assured that what God had promised, God was able to fulfill. Abraham was a great man of faith, what God told him to do, he did – and he did not question Him.

So the Promise of the Jews being given the land of Canaan has been fulfilled according to the scripture. And this covenant given to Abraham was not between God and Abraham but between God and Christ – it was the Christian Covenant. We are now the spiritual descendants of Abraham and we are striving for the promised land of heaven – just like Abraham did. We should follow God in all His ways like Abraham did.

Philippians 3:20
We are already citizens of heaven – may we act like it.

The covenant which God made with Abraham, and His promise concerning the land illustrate God’s way of dealing with mankind. He often fulfills promises in a physical way to the nation Israel; but His real meaning is the spiritual application to the church. And Christians are the true offspring of Abraham.
The Kingdom of David and Solomon – around 1000 BC

Chart taken from http://www.searchingthescriptures.net/main_pages/free_bible_land_maps

All of the land they were promised in Genesis 15 is under their control.