EVERLASTING LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT, PART 1

Terry N. Wilson, Pastor-Teacher

The Noahic Covenant provides the promise of Yahweh to humankind that the earth and its inhabitants will be preserved until the completion of His redemptive purpose. With the giving of the Abrahamic Covenant, God's plan to save people is detailed. **Genesis 12:1-3** is the initial and foundational promise of the covenant with Abraham.

The Importance of the Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is of vital importance to understanding biblical revelation. How? "It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament and reaches for its fulfillment into the New."[1] The New Testament points out that Jesus Christ, Abraham's seed, will make possible the final fulfillment of that covenant in the future.[2]

The Character of the Covenant Maker

As mentioned in the introduction to biblical covenants, Yahweh's character is revealed through the covenants He makes with men. In pursuing His saving agenda, Yahweh selected Abram (his name until it was changed in **Genesis 17**). Abram was an idolater. A man, who like his family and neighbors in Ur, worshipped the moon god. In Ur, lunar religion dominated.

Abram's call from the darkness of false worship to follow Yahweh to do His will was an act of sovereign grace. That graciousness by Yahweh regarding Abram was expanded to encompass all the families of the earth (**Genesis 12:3**). This divine purpose related to the prophecy articulated by God in **Genesis 3:15**. It was through Abram's

[1] John Walvoord, *The Master's Seminary Journal,* Fall 1999.
[2] Keith Essex, *The Master's Seminary Journal,* Fall 1999.

descendants, Israel, that the Seed of the woman would descend (**Romans 9:5**). The Seed who is the Christ, the Savior of the world.

The Abrahamic Covenant would serve as the basis for deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery (**Exodus 2:23-25**). Two other perfections or attributes are disclosed in that dealing with Abraham's descendants: faithfulness and omnipotence.

Divine faithfulness to His promises is shown in the covenant remembrance of three patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – who were deceased at the time of the enslavement and deliverance of the people who descended from them. It is not surprising, however, for it is a solemn truth about the character of Yahweh: that "God is not a man, that He should lie" (**Numbers 23:19)**. Divine reiteration of this impossibility in relation to the Abrahamic Covenant is found in **Hebrews 6:18** and, regarding eternal life, **Titus 1:2**.

The Exposition of the Promises Made to the Covenant Recipient

According to the book *A Systematic Summary of Biblical Doctrine*, "this Abrahamic Covenant is… the basis for the other covenants that God will institute. The initial and foundational promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are found in **Genesis 12:1-3**."

In the three verses that introduce the covenant, God does not use the word *covenant* when speaking to Abram. The term is only used in **Genesis 15:18** and **17:1-21**.[3] The introduction contains several promises from God to Abram.

There is a difference between a promise and a covenant. A promise is a declaration of the Lord's intention to do something for Abram and his seed. A covenant is the Lord's binding obligation, confirmed by a culturally known practice including an oath, to do something for Abram and his seed.

Yahweh's summons to Abram was to "go forth from your land, and from your kin and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you" (**Genesis 12:1**). The call of Abraham was shocking in the breadth and scope of its demand. The words "go forth" constitute an imperative. Yahweh told Abram to separate himself from his land (nation), and his relatives, and his father's house.

Yahweh did not identify the land to which He told Abram to go. However, that undisclosed place was one of the promises made to him. Yahweh promised to make Abram a great nation. "This was a promise to make him the progenitor like the men listed in **Genesis 10.** But this nation would be distinct from all previous nations because her

[3] *MacArthur Study Bible* notes.

ancestor is not an immediate descendant of Noah (ten generations separated Noah and Abraham) (**Genesis 11:10-26)**."[4]

"I will make your name great." – A great reputation

"I will bless you. . . and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." – Personal favor from Yahweh Himself. This would be manifested in fertility and prosperity.

"And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

[4] Keith Essex, *The Master's Seminary Journal,* Fall 1999.