

Studies in Genesis

20180819

Abraham's Seed

(Scripture's Full Revelation)

THE SEED(S)	DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE
NATURAL	All physical descendants of Abraham	Gen 12:1-3, 7
NATURAL/SPIRITUAL	Believing physical descendants of Abraham	Rom 9:6-8 Gal 6:16
SPIRITUAL	Believing non-physical descendants of Abraham	Gal 3:6-9 Gal 3:29
ULTIMATE	Jesus Christ	Gal 3:16

We Are Looking At Gen 15

- * The OT's "Doubting Thomas" — Gen 15:1-5
 - ◆ What can you give me if I have no heir
- * The OT's "Bold Peter" — Gen 15:6
 - ◆ ABRAM BELIEVED
- * The OT's "Conflicted Father" — Gen 15:7-21
 - ◆ "I believe ... but help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)

READY 15:7-21

The OT's Conflicted Father

- * This next section reminds me of Mark 9:14ff (turn there)
- * Note the father's exclamation in v. 24
 - ◆ "... I believe; help my unbelief!"
- * What is the point of this statement?
 - ◆ Even genuine belief can struggle with DOUBT
- * This perfectly captures Abram .. and us!!

Structure of vv. 7-21

- * The vision resumes .. "the land promise" — v. 7
- * Abram's doubt resurfaces — v. 8
- * God's response: A "blood covenant" — vv. 9-21
 - ◆ Preparation for the ceremony — vv. 9-11
 - ◆ Prophetic parenthetical — vv. 12-16
 - ◆ The ratification ceremony — v. 17
 - ◆ The covenant terms — vv. 18-21

Conflicted Father

- * The vision resumes — v. 7
 - ◆ Grammatical note .. The Hebrew construction indicates "continuous action"
 - ◆ Verse 6 was a "commentary" inserted into the one continuous vision — to supply us with an important theological truth
 - ◆ Namely .. how can sinful man get "right with God"

Conflicted Father

- ◆ The language of v. 7 is VERY EMPHATIC ..
- ◆ Literally "I MYSELF .. am the LORD .. who brought you out"
 - The pronoun is redundant and you can always supply the verb "to be" in the absence of a verb in Hebrew
 - God is reviewing his "credentials" to accomplish His purposes
- ◆ What is it that God reassures Abram of?
 - THE LAND!!
 - The seed & the land are the two central, and interrelated, struggles of Abram's faith

Conflicted Father

- * Abram's doubt resurfaces — v. 8
 - ◆ Abram responds just as he did in v. 2!!
 - ◆ He is simply asking for some form of tangible confirmation that he can hang onto ... Something I think we would all have to admit we do also!!
- 📖 FAITH grows in "fits and starts"
- 📖 God can work with "mustard seed" faith

Conflicted Father

- * But God .. with characteristic patience & grace .. again gives Abram what he asks for
- * Vv. 9-21 record God's blood covenant with Abram ... which proceeds in 4-stages
- * Stage 1: Preparation for the ceremony — vv. 9-11
 - ◆ God commands Abram to gather some animals — v.9
 - We can speculate all day long about the nature of the animals and their significance ... DON'T BOTHER!

Conflicted Father

- ◆ Instead, focus on Abram's response .. what is it? — v. 10

- OBEEDIENCE .. Abram is predictable on both sides of the equation — even though he doubts, he obeys

- ◆ What else does v. 10 suggest?

- THIS MUST HAVE BEEN A KNOWN PRACTICE

- Turn to Jeremiah 34:18 (Read)

- Archaeological discoveries in Mari (1950's) ... the Mari Tablets bear witness to the covenant procedure in vv. 10, 17

- AND Abram seems to know what God intends to do .. he cuts the animals in half — there was no instruction to do this

Ancient Day Mari

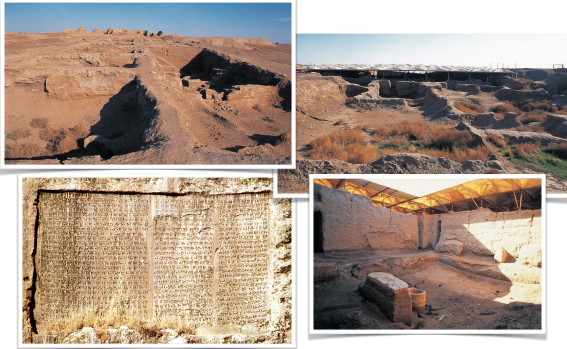


Modern Day Mari



- MARI
- Ancient City-State
- Flourished 2900 - 1760 BC
- Abram ~ 2165 - 1992 BC

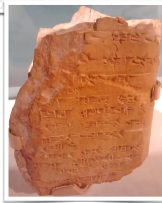
Mari Tablets



Mari Tablets - Cuneiform Script



- Generally written on clay tablets
- First discovered in 1933
- 20,000+ Tablets recovered
- Letters, Admin, Economic, and Judicial Texts



Conflicted Father

- ◆ Verse 11 also brings some “fanciful” commentary —
e.g. [the birds of prey signal impending doom!!!](#)
 - NO — take it at face value: Vultures show up around dead carcasses
- * **Stage 2: What's going on in vv. 12-16?**
 - ◆ The narrative pauses for a prophetic parenthetical
 - ◆ Remember how a parenthetical works ...

Conflicted Father

* Why does God do this?

- ◆ Because Abram's doubt is arising from God's apparent delay in fulfilling His promises
- ◆ So God decides to provide more detail
- ◆ And He provides a LOT!
- ◆ Seems that God wants to settle the land doubts "once and for all"

 Which should remind us that DELAY ≠ DENIAL

Conflicted Father

- * A "deep sleep" .. same Hebrew word as Gen 2:21
 - ◆ Ut-Oh .. Last time this happened a woman showed up!
- * Instead, God gives Abram the time line and the events that will transpire before He fulfills the land promise
 - ◆ Amazing prophecy — perfectly fulfilled
 - ◆ Verse 13 starts with an emphatic statement .. We might say something like — "NOW MARK MY WORDS!"

Conflicted Father

* What details do we get in vv. 13-16

- ◆ Two categories — National & Personal
- ◆ National details include
 - Sojourners in a foreign land
 - They will be servants
 - They will be afflicted
 - They will be there for 400 years

Conflicted Father

- God will judge the nation they serve
- God will bring them out
- God will give them great riches
- God will return them to “the Land”
- ◆ Personal details
 - Abram will live a peaceful life .. meaning — this won’t happen in your lifetime
 - Abram will live a long life

Conflicted Father

- * What interesting detail does God close with?
 - ◆ The reason for the timeframe
 - ◆ Their return depends upon “another” detail in God’s master plan!!
 - ◆ Israel was to be the agent of God’s judgment
- 📖 God’s “Rubik’s Cube” has so many dimensions that we will never align all the colors!
- 📖 It’s OK to “look back” and observe God’s sovereign hand .. but don’t waste looking for his unrevealed will

Additional Implications

- 📖 God’s people enter the kingdom through much tribulation .. turn to Acts 14:19-22
- 📖 As even the author of our salvation did .. turn to Luke 24:25-27
- 📖 Yet, God protects his covenant people .. Jesus says that not one who has been given to Him by the Father will be lost (John 17:12; 18:9)
- 📖 And, God will judge the “nations” — though He provides ample time for repentance .. 2 Pet 3:9

Conflicted Father

- * Stage 3: The ratification ceremony — v. 17:
What should we note about the ratification?
 - ◆ God alone ratifies its terms!
 - ◆ It is unilateral and unconditional
- * Stage 4: The covenant terms — vv. 18–21
 - ◆ v. 18a identifies the “smoking fire pot” and the “flaming torch” ... It is none other than the LORD!

Conflicted Father

- * What is different about the covenant language in v. 18 versus 12:7; 13:15?
 - ◆ Note the past (or perfect) tense vs. future tense
 - ◆ In God's eyes it is as “good as done” .. despite the prophesied 400 year wait
 - ◆ A lot “could” go wrong — but it won't with God!
- * Gen 15 closes with the boundaries of the land

Closing Question

- * Why does God “cut a covenant” with Abram .. Aren't His promises alone enough?
 - ◆ His promises are enough, but ...
 - ◆ Often times God condescends to human concepts, constructs, and forms in order to help us understand — or to reassure us
 - ◆ God wants us to know Him and to know His plans

Abrahamic Covenant

QUICK REVIEW

Covenant Basics

- * Covenants are central to God's redemptive plan
 - ◆ They define the promises by which God's kingdom purposes (plan) are accomplished
- * What are the key tenets of a covenant?
 - ◆ A formal agreement or treaty
 - ◆ Between two parties
 - ◆ With obligations and regulations
- * Covenants were well attested in the ANE culture of Abram's time

Basics .. Continued

- * We derive our covenants FROM THE BIBLE!
 - ◆ NOT through a systematic theological construct of man
- * Why do I emphasize this?
 - ◆ So as not to confuse the Biblical covenants with "Covenant Theology"
- * Covenant theology (CT) is a construct of the reformed tradition that superimposes a theological framework on the Biblical Covenants

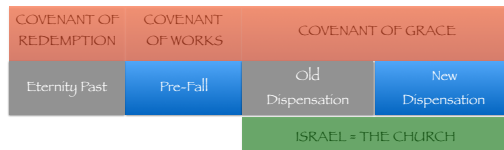
Basics .. Continued

- * The Biblical Covenants are then read and interpreted through the CT framework
- * CT has two .. or three .. “derived covenants” in their framework
 - ◆ The covenant of works (Gen 2:15-17)
 - ◆ The covenant of grace
 - ▶ Some say begins with A&E (Gen 3:15, 21)
 - ▶ Some say begins with Abram (Gen 15:6)

Basics .. Continued

- ◆ The covenant of redemption .. some systems
 - ▶ The “eternal” foundation for the covenant of grace
 - ▶ Made in eternity past between the Father and the Son
 - ◆ Son agreed to provide salvation through his substitutionary life, death and resurrection
 - ◆ Father agreed to accept the Son's substitute as the redeemer and head of the elect

Covenant Theology

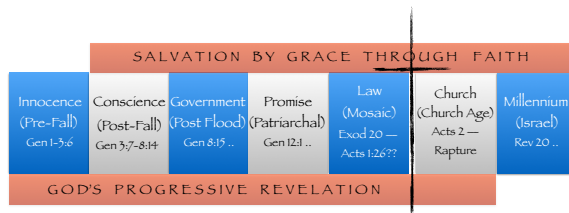


Basics .. Continued

- * We teach dispensational theology
- * Dispensational theology identifies ..
 - ♦ Different "administrations" through which God "governs" His kingdom program
 - ♦ God appoints "stewards" to whom He delegates authority for "administering" His program
 - ♦ The steward is given requisite information by which to carry out his responsibilities & is held accountable for fulfilling his duties
- * The Covenants articulate God's promises

Dispensational Theology

The "Dispensations" of Dispensationalism



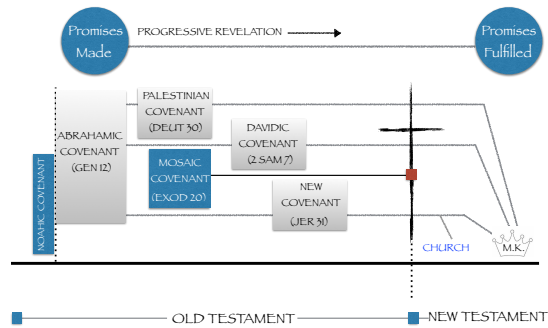
Two Key Thoughts

Dispensationalism is primarily concerned with the church (ecclesiology), the end-times (eschatology), and hermeneutics — specifically as it relates to interpreting prophecy and the relationship between the OT the NT

A dispensation is a noticeable era when God administers and deals with His creation in a unique way*

*Vlach, Dispensationalism

God's Covenants



Covenant "Forms"

- * Covenants take two forms .. **What are they?**
 - ◆ Conditional (Bi-lateral) or Unconditional (unilateral)
- * **What is the practical difference?**
 - ◆ One can be annulled by our "performance," another cannot
- * An unconditional covenant can incur TEMPORAL loss of blessings ..
- * But will ultimately be fulfilled in its entirety
 - ◆ The land promise is an instructive example

"Forms" .. Continued

- * A conditional covenant can both lose blessings and be annulled
- * And the BIG ONE ... once **ratified** a covenant's terms **cannot be changed**
 - ◆ Neither the parties
 - ◆ Nor the terms
- * Resource: Understanding End Times Prophecy, by Paul N. Benware
- * Resource: Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths, by Michael J. Vlach

Abrahamic Covenant

- * The GRAND-DADDY of all the OT covenants
- * Where do we find it?
 - ◆ “Skeletal form” in Gen 12:1-3
 - ◆ Expansion and reaffirmation in Gen 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-19; 22:15-18
 - ◆ Affirmation to Abram’s progeny
 - First Isaac — Gen 26:1-5
 - Then Jacob — Gen 28:10-15

Abrahamic Covenant

- * What is it?
 - ◆ God’s unconditional promises to bless Abram in three spheres
 - Personally, Nationally, and Universally
- * Personal promises include
 - ◆ A land — Gen 12:1
 - ◆ Blessing from God — Gen 12:2
 - Protection and reward — Gen 15:1
 - Peaceful and long life — Gen 15:15

Abrahamic Covenant

- ◆ A great name — Gen 12:2
 - Kings and nations from him — Gen 17:6, 20
- ◆ A channel for blessing or cursing (the gospel) — Gen 12:3
- * National Promises include
 - ◆ A great nation — Gen 12:2
 - ◆ Everlasting & specific land promise — Gen 13:14ff
 - ◆ Great in number — Gen 13:16; 15:5
 - ◆ God will be their God! — Gen 17:8

Abrahamic Covenant

- * Universal promises include
 - ◆ Blessing and cursing those who bless and curse him — Gen 12:3
 - ◆ All the families .. extent — Gen 12:3
- * Sign of the covenant is circumcision — Gen 17:10
- * Parties to the covenant
 - ◆ God
 - ◆ Abraham and his seed

Abrahamic Covenant

- * Partially fulfilled
- * All of the other permanent OT covenants flow out of and provide further detail about the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - ◆ Palestinian — The land
 - ◆ David — The Nation
 - ◆ New Covenant — God's unconditional fulfillment & spiritual components of salvation
