



Lake Wales
Church of Christ
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.
Lake Wales, FL 33898
www.lakewalescoc.com
(863) 676-4114

VOL. XXX
NO. 13
March 29, 2015

Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”
—Proverbs 18:10

A Study of the Messiah - The Descendant of Abraham -

We learned last week that God promised that the Messiah would be the seed of woman, a human being.

Several generations later, God focused the promise on one individual, a man named Abram, and declared that through him would come the Savior.

The Lord said to Abram,
“Go forth from your relatives
And from your father’s house
To the land which I will show you;
And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be
blessed” (Gen. 12:1–3).

This passage can be summarized as three distinct promises: to give Abraham a land, to make of him a great nation, and to bless all nations through him.

God further clarified the **land promise** in Genesis 15:1–21, that it would be granted after Abraham’s death to his descendants, that it would be preceded by 400 years of slavery, and that when iniquity of the current inhabitants was at a breaking point, God would bring Abraham’s descendants back to it to conquer it and possess it. The boundaries would be from “the river of Egypt [in the south]... to the River Euphrates [in the north].”

Some suggest that God never kept this promise, and use that as a basis for political movements like Zionism and false teachings like Premillennialism, which require the Jewish people return to the land of Palestine for God’s plans to move forward. But, in fact, God *did* keep this promise to the fullest extent. Joshua 21:43–45 says, “the Lord gave Israel all the land which He has sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it... Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.” Much later, 1 Kings 4:21 declares that “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River [Euphrates] to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt.”

It is true that the Jews do not live in the same extent of land today. But it is important to notice that *retaining* the land which God gave them was always a conditional promise, based on their continued faith and obedience. God warned them that the penalty for unfaithfulness would be that He would bring a nation from afar and, “you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it; moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples” (Deut. 28:63–64). This, too, happened exactly as God promised, first through the Assyrian empire and later through the Babylonian empire.

God fulfilled the **nation promise** by giving old Abraham a natural-born son Isaac through his wife Sarah (as amazing as that was!) and blessing his descendant Jacob, who had twelve sons, and who became a huge multitude. Some scholars estimate the descendants of Abraham at around two million souls by the time we find them camped around Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19:4–6, and 24:1–8. It was at this moment that God

claimed them as His own people and entered into a covenant with them, giving them the Law of Moses. “You shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” From that point onward, God speaks of them not just as the sons of Israel, but the nation of Israel.

But the most important of these three is the promise that Abraham wouldn't be the only benefactor; that God was putting in motion a plan that would eventually bless “all nations.” God later clarifies this in Genesis 22:18, saying, “in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” We can, in fact, call this third promise the **seed promise**. A descendant of Abraham would grant blessings to the whole earth.

The Apostle Paul makes clear that this was a reference to one man. “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” (Gal. 3:16; *cf.* Acts 3:25–26).

So, Genesis 3:15 made it clear that the Savior would be a human being; Genesis 12:3 makes it clear that it will be a child of the lineage of Abraham. “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad,” said Jesus (John 8:56).

God made of Abraham a nation, and gave to his descendants a land, to carry forth the Messianic promise that would ultimately bless all mankind. And the rest of the story of the Old Testament shows us, through God's dealings with Israel, what happens when we trust God, what happens when we disobey God, and how God keeps His promises even against amazing odds. But really, it was all looking forward to the fullness of time, when God would claim His people through Jesus the Christ (Rom. 15:4).

While it's clear to see that the promises to Abraham are much less about God playing favorites than God making a choice that would bless all mankind, it is still extremely important to recognize, as Jesus said in John 4:22, “salvation is from the Jews.” God has always intended to save individuals from every tribe, tongue, and nation of the human race (Isaiah 49:6, John 10:16, Acts 17:15), but He accomplished it through a single family, the lineage of Abraham (Rom. 3:1–2). —*John Guzzetta*