

## Bible Basics – Session Two: The Promise in the Old Testament

### Review: The Word of God

There is a historical perspective, time line, and various authors.

It is more of a dialogue than a history: Is the Kingdom a light to the Gentiles? Or only for Israel?

There are multi-layered pictures of God.

We must see the forest and not just the trees.

### What the Word of God DOES to us:

Words have power.

What does this word say to me, to the world?

Let the Word speak for itself.

### The Promises of God in the Old Testament

There are **two** types of promises:

- **Unconditional:** one way – God to us
  - Marriage is a sort of unconditional promise (love and faithfulness)
  - Grandparents are like unconditional promises
  - God states: I will love you and be with you (Baptism)
  - God's divine acceptance: Agape love
  - Nurturing: I will give you all you need
- **Conditional:** If you . . . , then I will . . .
  - Business contract: If you send me money, I will give you . . .
  - Mutual give and take

### The Promises to Abraham

- Genesis 12 (J source): An unconditional promise: land, people, blessing to all the nations
  - What is going on here? God is giving Israel this divine blessing. It is the rationale for all that happens in the conquest and the rule of David.
  - This promise is the main hub for all that happens in the Old Testament—everything that follows is an offspring of this text.
  - The story of Abraham after this shows how unconditional this promise is because Abraham is not all that faithful.
    - To his credit, Abraham does leave home with his brother Lot.
    - There is the whole issue of Abraham passing his wife Sarah off as his sister. Actually, the pharaoh seems more moral than Abraham.
    - Abraham divides the land with Lot.
- Genesis 15 (E source): An unconditional promise, but it underlines the response of Abraham's faith.
  - Fear not: there is this personal experience of faith.
  - Issue of the illegitimate son: a test of faith that is Abraham fails in the next chapter.

6: “believed”: grabbing on to the promises of God makes you “right” with Him.  
In a dream/vision.  
The light going through the halved animals: Abraham is asking for a sign; he needs something visual.  
Anticipates the Exodus  
Make a covenant: literally “cut”  
Then the boundaries of the Davidic kingdom.  
Humanity of Abraham: Chapter 16—the birth of Ishmael.  
Notice how God takes care of Ishmael.

- Genesis 17 (P source): Conditional, addition of the act of circumcision  
3: fall on his faith: worship experience  
Changing of the name  
Repeats the promise of land and people  
9: “As for you. . .”—the conditional elements  
You shall be circumcised. This is a sign that you belong to God: if you do not have this sign, then you do not belong.  
Change the name of Sarah  
Handles the issue of Ishmael differently  
Chapter 18: the coming of the three angels = the Lord  
The promise is repeated.

This promise to Abraham keeps popping up in the OT: For example, see Exodus 32. The people build the golden calf, and God gets angry. Moses intercedes by reminding God of his covenant to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Issue in Genesis 22 of the sacrifice of Isaac: The promise is put in jeopardy, yet it becomes a test of faith. God gives the promise, but there is this response of faith.

### **The Promise of the Ten Commandments (The Law): Exodus 19-20.**

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery.  
Chapter 19: Theophany (The appearance of God in a holy place.)  
God begins the law with his acceptance and deliverance of Israel; “This is what I have done for you . . . “  
Conditional: Therefore, you shall have no other gods before me.

### **The Promise to David: I Samuel 7**

Unconditional promise of a son. The promise looks forward to Jesus.

The idea of promise guides so much of the Old Testament story. What God has promised guides the people in the choices they make. They are indeed a people of promise. When they forget the promise of God, they get into trouble. You can read much of the OT through the eyes of the promise.

**Getting the order right:** The promise always comes before the command.  
When we reverse this order, we have problems.  
Begin with the Grace of God.

**The Word as Law and Gospel**

The law convicts us, protects us, drives us into the mercy of God.  
The gospel saves us.

**Session Three: The Hope of God in the Old Testament.**

Read Isaiah 40 to the end of the book.  
What are the people looking forward to?