



19 | GENESIS 15

JESUS AND ABRAHAM'S COVENANT

God is the author and finisher of our faith. He brings us to him through his sovereign love and grace. Let us praise him and give him all the glory of our salvation.

Outline

1. **THE BUILDING OF ABRAHAM'S FAMILY (15:1-5)**
 - The Revealer of Salvation
 - The Protector of Salvation
 - The Benefactor of Salvation
 - The Doubts of Salvation
 - The Promise of Salvation
2. **THE BASIS OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH (15:6-11)**
 - Faith's Credit
 - Faith's Capitan
 - Faith's Question
 - Faith's Cost
 - Faith's Courage
3. **THE BRIGHTNESS OF ABRAHAM'S FUTURE (15:12-20)**
 - A Divine Promise
 - A Definite Promise
 - A Delightful Promise
 - The Divine Presence
 - A Determined Promise

Songs

Bow the Knee
Before the Throne of God Above
Wonderful, Merciful Savior
Cornerstone

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

Call to Worship

Psalm 29:1-2 | Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

Introduction

There ought to be great joy when you consider your salvation. Nehemiah said, “**The joy of the Lord is your strength.**” Genesis 15 brings us to the **foundation pillars of the new covenant**. That is, **our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone**. Salvation is a free gift of God to undeserving sinners.

This is a very remarkable chapter that reinforces the wonder of grace. It's an awe-inspiring testimony. Abram had left friends and family at God's command. He had undergone a famine, the **humiliating experience in Egypt, separation from Lot**, and more. God therefore spoke to Abram in **a vision to strengthen him**, and to reenforce the truth and reliability of his promises.¹

TAKING YOUR BREATH AWAY

FOOTBALL HIT: Have you ever had something take your breath away? When I was young, we loved to **play tackle football in the backyard** with the neighborhood kids. I was about 13 years old, and I caught the ball and scored a touchdown. But this is neighborhood football so there was a pile on. One kid hit me so hard it knocked the breath out of me and everyone piled on. I ended up breaking my collarbone! It wasn't so terrible. Hey, I scored for my team!

PYRANEES MOUNTAINS: Another way I've had my breath taken away was when we arrived in the Basque region of Spain. We went to the city of San Sebastian, and we got to go to the **top of a mountain cliff where we saw the beautiful Pyrenees mountains and the Atlantic Ocean** that seemed to go on forever. It just took my breath away it was so beautiful with the ocean waters crashing against the cliffs. And there was ocean as far as the eye could see.

Genesis 15 is like that. It takes your breath away. It is the introduction of the new covenant truth of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

MAGNA CARTA OF OUR SALVATION

Genesis 15 is our charter of salvation. It is one of the most important documents ever written. Abram's call in Genesis 12 to leave Ur and go to the promised land has been called “the Bible's Magna Carta.” As the apostle Paul puts it, here God announces the gospel in advance to Abraham (*cf* Gal 3:8).²

It's far more important than the **Declaration of Independence**; far, far more **important than the Mayflower Compact**; far, far more important than the **Constitution of the United States of America**. If you understand what God is saying here, you will be able to understand the history of the world, for what God is saying here marks and colors all of the subsequent history that follows it. What God is saying here is an iron fist upon history, to say that certain things are going to be done.³

Key thought: God is the author and finisher of our faith. He brings us to him through his sovereign love and grace. Let us praise him and give him all the glory of our salvation.

1. THE BUILDING OF ABRAHAM'S FAMILY (15:1-5)

GOD'S PROMISE TO BRING JESUS INTO HUMANITY

¹ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch: Genesis* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2002), 138.

² Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 23, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2007), 77.

³ Adrian Rogers, “The Promise That Changed the Word,” in *Adrian Rogers Sermon Archive* (Signal Hill, CA: Rogers Family Trust, 2017), Ge 17:1–8.

The **Abrahamic covenant** is really about **God's promise to bring Jesus into humanity** through the family of Abraham, and to save all those who trust in Messiah.

God fulfills his amazing promise through **a miracle for Abram**. He's chosen a man with a **barren wife** to bring the promised seed into the world! Abram's family is a miracle. His wife is barren, and Abram knew it. He therefore had his own plans until the word of the Lord came to him.

THE REVEALER OF SALVATION

Abraham needed God to reveal salvation to him, just like all of us. Without God's word, we would all be **"leaning to our own understanding"** (cf Pro 3:5-6). After the events of Abram rescuing Lot and meeting Melchizedek, the king of Salem or peace, the word came again to Abram.

Genesis 15:1a | After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision.

Had God not reached out to Abram, he would have never come. We will see that Abram had his own plan for his family. **He at first did not believe God and wanted to have Eliezer his servant be his heir**. He would adopt his servant and make him a son. This was a common practice. The point is Abram had earthly solutions for life until the "word of the Lord" came to him in a vision.

God's reveals our need of him in salvation, but he continues to reveal his will to us through his word **in sanctification and guidance and providence**.

God promises to guide your steps as a believer. You are not less important to God than Abraham. Since he gave his own Son for you, how will he not with Christ **freely and generously give you all things (Rom 8:32)?** God is holding nothing back from you. He give you **"every spiritual blessing"** in Christ (Eph 1:3).

THE PROTECTOR OF SALVATION

The **promises of God in salvation** are **so big, they seem impossible**. Will God really save me and bring me to sanctification in Christ! Yes! He promises to make it happen. There is **no need to fear**.

God is the protector of Abram. God promises to fight for Abraham and for you! We are **"more than conquerors"** because of God's promise to protect you.

Genesis 15:1b | "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield..."

Whatever enemy stands against Abram is standing against God. This is a **promise of protection** against **all enemies**.⁴ Abram enters this chapter afraid. He's had ten years now from his calling to come out of Ur. He's been given a promise of a child who will turn into a nation of people. He been given a land promise, that will be the home of this nation. But thus far nothing has panned out. He's dealt with **Pharoah**. He's dealt with his own bad choices.

For the Christian, our protection is God promise to use all things to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28-30). "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (Psa 23:5). Remember God's promise: **"No weapon formed against you shall prosper"** (Isa 54:17).

1 John 4:4 | Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

THE BENEFACITOR OF SALVATION

Not only is Yahweh Abram's (and our) protector. But he is also the **benefactor** of salvation.

⁴ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 135.

Genesis 15:1c | "Your reward shall be very great."

The NKJV translates this, "**I am your exceeding great reward**" (15:1b). God tells Abram and all of us, "I am all that you are looking for!" Even if this is translated "your reward shall be very great" the word "reward" points to God as his **reward and benefactor**.⁵

He says in Ephesians 1:3, He "**has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.**"

God richly rewards faith richly. The reward of faith is intimacy with the triune God. The author of Hebrews refers to the Abrahamic covenant when he says God rewards those who trust in him.

Hebrews 11:6 | Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that **he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

Abraham, despite all his questions, despite all his doubts, he diligently sought out and pursued the living God. He believed he would be rewarded with all that God had promised, and **God counted it to him as righteousness.** He **counts everything dung** compared to knowing Yahweh (*cf* Phil 3:8).

THE DOUBTS OF SALVATION

God had just told Abram that salvation is not about any earthly thing, but about having God as your reward. Yet God listens to Abram's struggles with the earthly. He's growing. He's trying to understand. He was **an idol worshipper in the land of Ur not too long before.**

Abram brings his doubts to the faithful promise keeping God. Abram is **worried**, because he's promised this great inheritance of the promised land, but he has no one to give it to. Abram and Sarai have no heir.⁶

Genesis 15:2-3 | But Abram said, "O LORD God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."

Scripture nowhere condemns those asking honest questions or sincerely seeking assurance. In this case, Abram was given a far-reaching vision of his descendants' future destiny in the land.⁷ He's

ABRAM'S SOLUTION

Abram's apparent conclusion was that God's promise wasn't going to happen, so that a household servant like Eliezer would be his heir. Such adoption was common where he came from.⁸ **Abram decided he'd adopt his servant, Eliezer.** He was not sinning. He was trying to understand God's plan for him.

⁵ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967). See also M. Dahood, in *Bib.*, XLV, 1964, 282; also M. Kessler, in *VT*, XIV, 1964, 494–497.

⁶ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 308.

⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 72.

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 223. See also Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 420.

THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

Now God reveals something breathtaking to Abram. **Abram brought his doubts to the faithful promise keeping God.** Abram is **worried**, because he's promised this great inheritance of the promised land, but he has no one to give it to. Abram and Sarai have no heir.⁹ Abram's given him his own solution according to his own understanding. "Eliezer shall be my heir," he says. In response, **God brings him a God-sized solution.**

Genesis 15:4-5 | And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."⁵ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

A NEW PROMISE – A BEGOTTEN SON

God had come to Abram in a night vision (15:1) and promised him the unthinkable—a family. Now Abram and his wife, Sarai, were childless. They were also old—well beyond child-bearing age. But here God promised that Abram's heir would not be one of his servants, **but a biological son of his own** (15:4).¹⁰ This son will not be adopted, but **begotten!** This is, as Paul puts it in **Galatians 3:8, the "gospel" preached to Abram.** Abram had a plan since it didn't look like God's promises were inside the realm of possible.

Abram had not yet been **promised a son until now.** So far he's promised a nation. He doesn't get it until **God tells him that his heir will be a son from his own body!** The heir would be his congenital son.¹¹

Men used to think they could count the stars. We now know they are innumerable. Most of the stars in the sky are actually each galaxies like our Milky Way. To count the stars would be impossible! God's promise to Abram was **one to stagger the imagination.** A God who can create galaxies and nebulae and countless worlds can certainly give **Abram a countless seed.**¹²

A NEW TESTAMENT PROMISE

The New Testament reveals that the promise is fulfilled, both before and after Christ, **in the multitude of believers** (e.g. Rom. 4:11, 12; 9:7, 8).¹³

The word by which God created the stars would also guarantee Abram's seed.¹⁴ Not only will **Abram father the promised son named Isaac,** but **he will be the patriarch of multitudes,** as numerous as the stars. Now Abram must leave the future to the God he has confessed.¹⁵ Abram and all of us must listen to God's command to **"Be still and know that I am God"** (Psa 46:10).

GOD'S BLESSING INFINITELY GREATER

What about you? Do you see God as weak and small and unable to help you? His blessing to you is **"exceeding, abundantly above** all that you could ever ask or imagine" (Eph 3;20-21).

⁹ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 308.

¹⁰ Kurt Strassner, *Opening up Genesis*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 71.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 224.

¹² John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ge 15:5-6.

¹³ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 135.

¹⁴ Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 55.

¹⁵ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 166.

2. THE BASIS OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH (15:6-11)

Let's review. To bring Jesus Christ into the world, God chooses an old man with a barren wife. This is an impossible feat. In our salvation God does the impossible. **God begins by telling Abram** what he is going to do. He's going to give Abram **a promised miracle son** and multiply his descends innumerable.

FAITH'S CREDIT

What is Abram's response to God's promise of giving him a son (that will eventually lead to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ)? **He believes God** and it is accounted to him as God's perfect righteousness on his account. The gospel was preached to Abraham, and he believed it!

Genesis 15:6 | And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

AMEN!

The Hebrew construction for Abram's faith "he believed" (*he'emin + be prep*) literally means, "Amen!" Abram was saying, yes! Amen! I believe! It means to **place your trust in someone with total confidence** with no doubting (e.g., Exo 19:9; 1 Sam 27:12). The general idea is reliance, and the orientation of the person's trust is the future.¹⁶

Abram believed with all his heart that a vast people would come from his own body. And on that silent night, that holy night, he inwardly **breathed and, likely, voiced an audible "Amen"** ("It is so") to God.¹⁷

ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Abram believed the Lord and he credited it to him as **an alien, foreign righteousness that is not his own**. This foundational truth is repeated three times in the New Testament (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23) to show that righteousness is reckoned in return for faith.¹⁸ Paul describes this alien righteousness in living color in Philippians 3.

Philippians 3:8-9 | That I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own** that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, **the righteousness from God that depends on faith.**

Paul understood that true faith is not dependent on human merit, but on the grace of divine credit. There's a **price to be paid by Christ that is immeasurable**, just like Christ's love is immeasurable.

FAITH'S CAPTAIN

God can do the impossible. He directs our steps just as he directed Abram.

Genesis 15:7 | And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

So the same **God that called Abram to come out of Ur will bring him into the promised land.**

¹⁶ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 166.

¹⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 229.

¹⁸ Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 55.

HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK...

He says to the Christian, "**he who began a good work** in your will complete it" (Phil 1:6). God will keep his word. He brought you this far, and he will bring you home to heaven one day.

FAITH'S QUESTION

Abram is just told he's going to have an heir. Sarai will have a child. Abram believes God, but he has questions. How can I know I'll get not just the child, but the land too?

Genesis 15:8 | But he said, "O LORD God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"

Nowhere does Scripture rebuke us for bringing our burdens and questions to God. So many of the Psalms is about bringing you questions and doubts to God. This is **not a sign of unbelief, but of deep faith and intimacy with God.**

This **was the question of a believing heart**, and consistent with the strongest faith that God, of course, knew full well was in Abram.¹⁹ He believed God, but could not conceive how all this would be done!

Isn't that how we are? We believe God's promises, **but we have no idea how he will bring them to pass.** If we could know, it would be breathtaking!

FAITH'S COST

God has to put Abram to sleep because the promise is one sided. Abram, a man of faith and the friend of God, questions God, and God answers! **How does God answer? He calls to make five different sacrifices.**

Genesis 15:9-11 | He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

God's covenant with Abram is confirmed by a ritual (15:7–21). Abram is to bring **a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove, and a young pigeon.** The heifer and the ram he is to cut in two and arrange in parallel rows. Remember, Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice: the **"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"** (Jn 1:29).

THE COVENANT

Abram understood exactly what God was ordering him to do because this custom was common in Abram's Mesopotamian homeland where when two parties solemnized a promise/covenant, they would kill an animal, divide it in two, and arrange the halves so that the covenanting parties could walk between the halves of the body of the animal.²⁰ Abram is now waiting for God to come and make this covenant with him.

FAITH'S COURAGE

Though Abraham doubts, he fights for joy in God. He likely doesn't understand the ritual completely. Where is God? Will he show up? Isn't a covenant supposed to be cut by two people?

¹⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 230.

²⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 230. Hamilton says, "The most frequent way in Hebrew to say 'make a covenant' is 'cut a covenant.'" The only other reference in the Old Testament to this kind of covenant ritual is Jeremiah 34:18. Victor P. Hamilton, "Genesis," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 21.

Genesis 15:11 | And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

The fact that Abram chases away the birds of prey is significant. First, it shows Abram's **powerlessness to keep the covenant**. For unclean **birds of prey** to swoop **down on** the offering animals is an evil omen.²¹ It shows the danger Abram is in if he's to try to procure his own righteousness. He's got to **fight to trust in God**, like we all do. There's constant satanic attack.

Second, it **shows his faith**. He's waiting for God to come down and walk with him through the halves to cut the covenant. God is showing him he cannot keep the covenant.

WAITING, WAITING, WAITING

Normally in the cutting of a covenant agreement, the carcasses of the animals **would have been eaten by the two parties**. But Abram is **waiting for God so long** that they have become food for the birds of prey. Yet notice what Abram is doing. Here Abram prevents this—**signifying his faith that God** would not ultimately allow such a fate, because he would keep his solemn promise. **God would indeed triumph over the covenant curse**.²²

3. THE BRIGHTNESS OF ABRAHAM'S FUTURE (15:12-20)

Now we come to the most interesting and encouraging part of this event in the life of Abraham. God

A DIVINE PROMISE

God has to put Abram to sleep because the promise is one sided.

Genesis 15:12 | As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

ABRAM AND ADAM'S SLEEP

Abram's trance is described as a "deep sleep" (*tardēmâ*), the same slumber that **befell Adam**.²³ The truth is, **when God does something great, he's got to take us out of the way!**

A DEFINITE PROMISE

Blessing will come to Abram's descendants even in their adversity and suffering.

Genesis 15:13-14 | Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

The future at times will see more discouraging and impossible for Abram. His descendants will be enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. By this prophecy, the Lord alleviates

²¹ Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 55.

²² Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 23, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2007), 86.

²³ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, vol. 1B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 173.

Abram's anxiety about the land. It describes in miniature the essential events in the life of his descendants Israel as depicted in the Pentateuch, anticipating the conquest of Canaan.²⁴

MANY POSSESSIONS

Not only will God's people be delivered from Egypt after 400 years, but they will **"come out with great possessions."** **Even in adversity, God richly blesses his children!**

It will often look like God is not going to fulfill his promises, but we must **look beyond the wind and the waves and look to Christ**. Look to his nail pierced hands and feet. He will bring to pass what he promises. No matter how dim life may look we must remember the words of Hudson Talyor, missionary to China, "The future is as bright as the promises of God."

A DELIGHTFUL PROMISE

Despite all the waiting, Abram would go to God in peace after a full life.

Genesis 15:15-16 | As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

But God had not forgotten about the sins of the people in the land. God is just, and would bring retribution to those in the land, namely the Amorites, through Abram's descendants under Joshua.²⁵

THE DIVINE PRESENCE

Here in this verse, we see the triune God passing through the fire.

Genesis 15:17 | When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

God made **a fiery appearance as a smoking firepot** radiating orange in the darkness. It **was a theophany**, a visual manifestation of God! Moses would view a similar phenomenon in the burning bush (cf Exo 3:2).²⁶

GOD ALONE KEEPS THE COVENANT

First and foremost, **this demonstrated that God would keep the covenant by himself**. There is no expectation of perfection from Abram. Abram cannot pay for his sins. Jesus, who is Yahweh, walking through these sacrifices in a theophany, demonstrates that the complete responsibility for the covenant falls upon the triune God. Child of God, you cannot add one thing that's been done for you by Christ. "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Further, this alludes to **the glory of God's presence in the glory cloud** that would accompany Israel, as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan, in the pillar of fire and cloud (Exo 14:24).²⁷

Ultimately this is **Jesus who is both the Light of the world and the Lamb of God**. Our salvation is in Christ alone!

²⁴ Mathews, *ibid.*

²⁵ Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 55.

²⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 234.

²⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 72.

A DETERMINED PROMISE

Providence teaches us that “all things work after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). God guides our steps. The steps of a justified person are ordered by the Lord. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and God has ordained those works and steps in our lives (Eph 2:10). This is the doctrine of God's providence.

Genesis 15:18-21 | On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

Only **in David's reign were the boundaries** of verse 18 attained, and then as an empire rather than a homeland.²⁸ Today some 4,000 years have passed since that wondrous event, and today modern Israel approximates the general boundaries listed here.

These land promises are very specific. They are being fulfilled and will be fulfilled. They expand to the entire cosmos. These land promises come right out of the creation mandate. Be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the world. God tells you to have influence in and through the family for the purpose of human flourishing through relation to Yahweh.

How could God's promise of salvation have been displayed more vividly? What could be more grandiose and glorious? The only way would have been **for the God who gives these promises** to take on human nature and **taste death in the place of the covenant-breaking children of Abram**. And that is precisely what God did in Jesus Christ. On the cross, the covenant curse fell completely on Jesus, so that the guilty ones who place their trust in him might experience the blessings of the covenant.²⁹

Fellow Christians, **“If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise”** (Gal 3:29). By God's Word you are now part of Abram's offspring, his *people*. And there is an ultimate *land* awaiting you, the same land to which Abram went, full of years and in peace.³⁰ And you are not only heir of the promised land, you are heir of the cosmos. You are an heir of God and join heir with Christ! Glory and hallelujah.

Conclusion

Look at **God's plan of salvation in the Abrahamic covenant**. It takes your breath away.

I guess you could think of the greatness of God's plans for you by **thinking of how small and tiny your children were when they were first born**. Have you **held a newborn infant**? I remember Will was so tiny. Now he's 6 foot 4 inches tall!

You just don't know what God has in store for you, but it's amazing. His plan is to grow you, not to be 6 foot 4, but to grow into the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:14, The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

²⁸ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 136.

²⁹ Iain M. Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1999), 59.

³⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 235.