



# The Promised One



## God's Promise for the Nations

In the Old Testament period, God made several promises or covenants.<sup>1</sup> Though God made promises to particular people (like Abraham and David), and a particular group of people (Israel), God's central promise (i.e., "God's promise for the nations") has application to all people, including each of us today. In this study series, we have discussed four major promises/covenants<sup>2</sup> revealed in the Old Testament. These include the following:

- ❶ Promise to Abraham (*Genesis 12:1-3; 15:9-21; 17:2-21*) – *Abrahamic Covenant*
- ❷ Covenant with Israel, through Moses (*Exodus 19-24*) – *Sinaitic (Mosaic) Covenant*
- ❸ Promise to David (*2 Samuel 7:5-16*) – *Davidic Covenant*
- ❹ Promise of a New Covenant (*Jeremiah 31:31-34*) – *New Covenant*

## What Happened After the Promise of the New Covenant?

- ❑ Jewish people returned to the Promised Land, but the number of Jews was relatively small, and they did not possess the land.<sup>3</sup> This return did not appear to be the restoration promised in the New Covenant. The Jews continued to wait for the promised king (the Messiah) and complete restoration to the land.
- ❑ Persian rule in Palestine was taken over by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. Alexander's successors (the Ptolemies and Seleucids)<sup>4</sup> ruled until the Jewish revolt in 166 BC. The Jews maintained independence until overtaken by the Roman Empire in 63 BC.

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The New Testament begins with these words: "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (*Matthew 1:1, NIV*). Around 5 BC,<sup>5</sup> a baby was born in the town of Bethlehem (*Luke 2:4-7; cf. Micah 5:2*). He was given the name "Jesus." Was Jesus the fulfillment of God's "promise for the nations?" Let us consider the four major promises/covenants.



## Promise to David

About 1000 years before Jesus' birth, God made his promise to David (see 2 Samuel 7:11-16). When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would have a baby, he said, "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (*Luke 1:31-33, NIV*).

1. How does Jesus fulfill the promise to David?

<sup>1</sup> In Old Testament times, a covenant (Hebrew *berith*) could be 1) a mutual agreement between equals; 2) a one-sided disposition imposed by a superior party (the superior party "commands" the covenant, and the servant is to obey.); or 3) a self-imposed obligation or promise (normally unconditional). God's covenants were like (2) or (3).

<sup>2</sup> Not all of God's promises are in the form of "covenant" but his major promises & covenants can be tied together.

<sup>3</sup> The Jews' return involved three primary movements (537, 458, 445 BC). The number of Jews was roughly 70,000.

<sup>4</sup> Ptolemy and Seleucus (former generals under Alexander) headed dynasties called the Ptolemies (based in Egypt) and the Seleucids (based in Syria). Both dynasties ruled in Palestine at different times.

<sup>5</sup> We might expect Jesus' birth to be in year 1 AD (anno Domini – "in the year of the Lord"). However, the calendar established by Dionysius in AD 525 was in error. Most estimates of Jesus' birth date are in the range of 6 to 4 BC.

### **Covenant with Israel through Moses**

About 1440 years before Jesus' birth, God made his covenant with Israel. When Jesus came, he said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;<sup>6</sup> I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (*Matthew 5:17, NIV*). The apostle Paul wrote, "Christ is the end<sup>7</sup> of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (*Romans 10:4, NIV*).

2. How does Jesus fulfill the covenant with Israel?

### **New Covenant**



About 600 years before Jesus' birth, God promised a "new covenant." In Hebrews 8:6, Jesus is called the mediator of the new covenant. Jesus proclaimed the beginning of the new covenant when he celebrated the last supper with his disciples before his crucifixion. He "took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me'" (*1 Corinthians 11:25, NIV*).

3. How does Jesus fulfill the new covenant?

### **Promise to Abraham**

Almost 2100 years before Jesus' birth, God made a promise to Abraham. God told Abraham, "In your seed (offspring) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice" (*Genesis 22:18, NKJV*). The apostle Paul later wrote, "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" (*Galatians 3:16, NIV*).

📖 "Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (*Galatians 3:6-8, NIV*).

📖 "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (*Galatians 3:26-29, NIV*).

4. How does Jesus fulfill the promise to Abraham?

### **Receiving God's Promise for the Nations**

5. What does it mean to have "faith in Christ Jesus" (*Galatians 3:26*)? <sup>8</sup> What does it mean to "be clothed with Christ" and "belong to Christ" (*3:27, 29*)? <sup>9</sup>



<sup>6</sup>"the Law or the Prophets" means the Old Testament Scriptures, including the Law and the Old Covenant.

<sup>7</sup> "end" (τέλος, *telos*) – could also be translated "goal."

<sup>8</sup> To "have faith in Christ" is to believe in who he is and what he has done, and to trust in him alone for salvation. Romans 10:9 says, "if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (NIV). Faith "in Christ" involves identification with him, which water baptism signifies. We must be united with him in his death if we are to be united with him in his resurrection life. See Romans 6:3-7. Being united with Christ in his death involves the death of our old self (Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20).

<sup>9</sup> Being "clothed with Christ" involves "becoming like Christ," which calls for action on our part (see Colossians 3:1-17). "Belonging to Christ" refers to our relationship with him as our Lord and Savior. Christians are "in Christ."

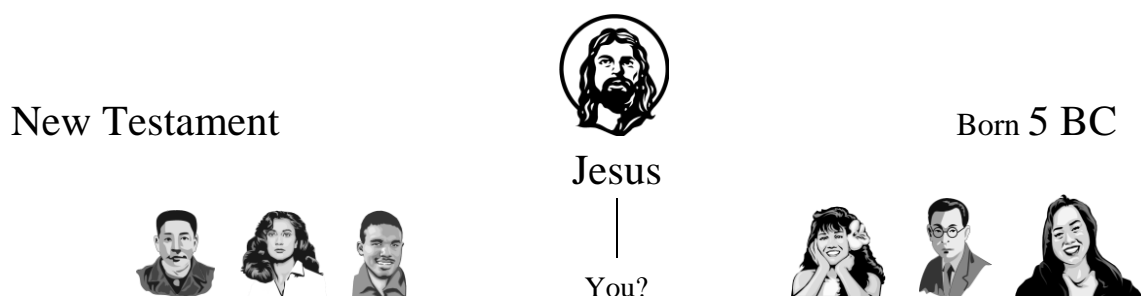
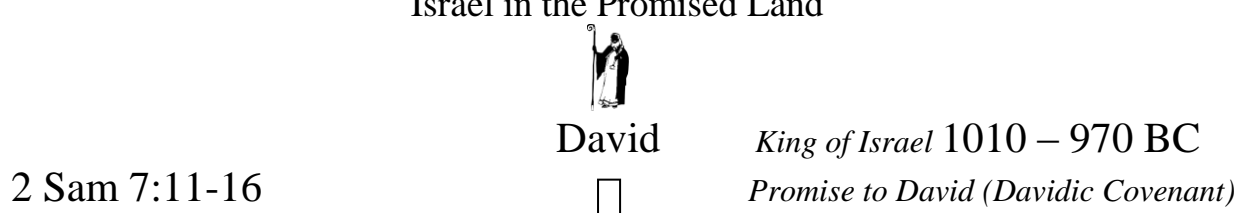
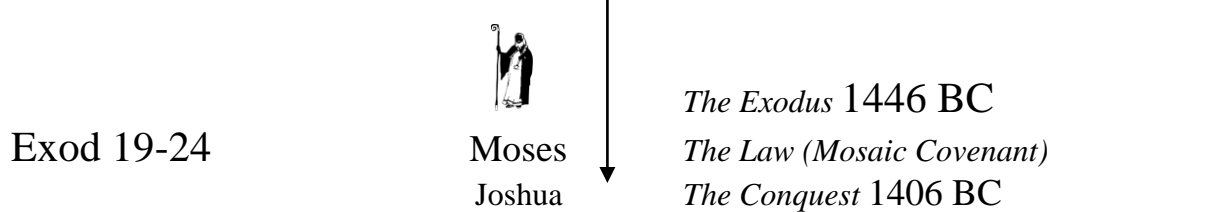
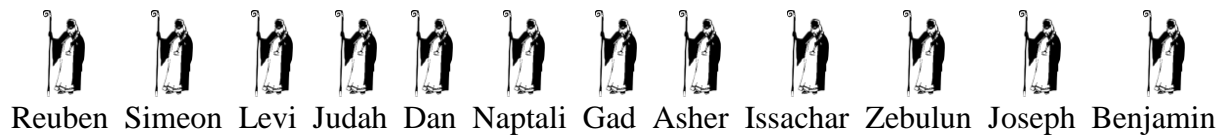
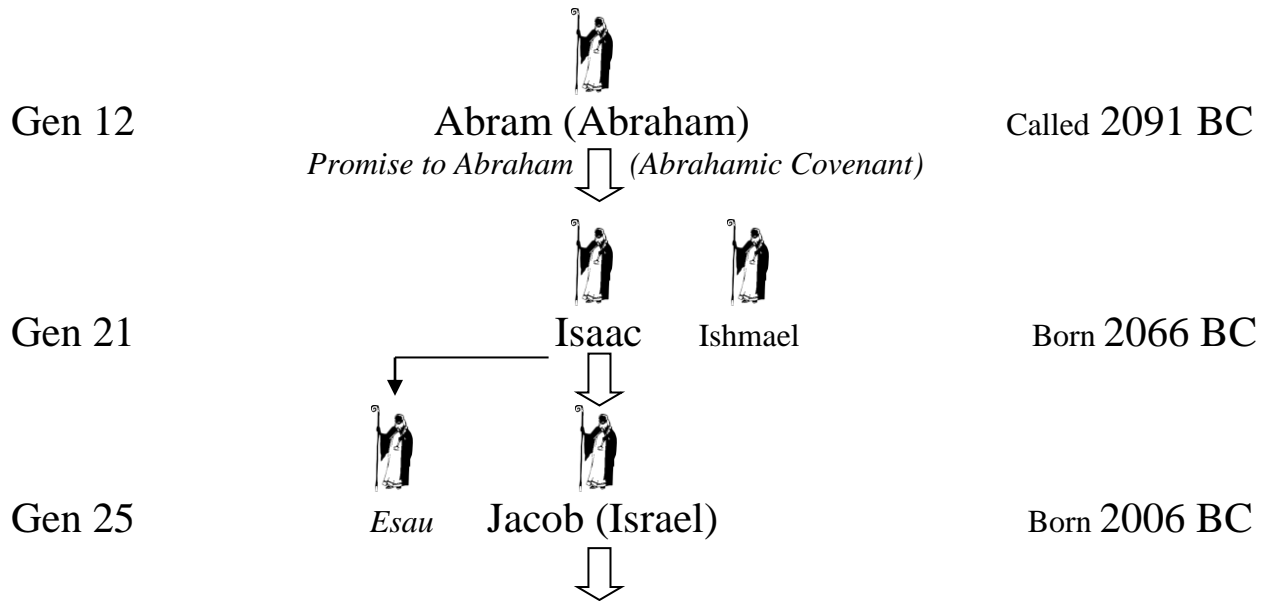
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Promise/Covenant	Fulfillment in “the Promised One”	Remaining Questions
<p>❶ Promise to Abraham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Great nation (many descendants and a land)</li> <li>➤ Blessing</li> <li>➤ All nations on earth will be blessed through his seed (offspring)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16; 3:6-9, 14, 26-29</i></p> <p>The “seed” is Christ, who is the “true seed” of Abraham. It is “in Christ” (through faith) that all peoples may be blessed and become recipients of the promise.</p>	<p>We see many descendants and blessing to the nations. But where is the land?</p>
<p>❷ Covenant with Israel through Moses</p> <p>If they obey God, they will be ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ God’s treasured possession (His special people)</li> <li>➤ A kingdom of priests – to represent God and be mediators of His grace to the nations</li> <li>➤ A holy nation – set apart to reflect God’s holiness</li> </ul> <p>This is tied to the promised land (<i>Deuteronomy 5:32-33</i>)</p> <p>This includes the tabernacle and sacrificial system</p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4</i></p> <p>Jesus is the culmination (end and goal) of this covenant. Jesus came to bring the Law to its intended goal, which is found in him. The Law pointed to Jesus, and he fulfilled its demands, and his teaching superseded the Law.</p>	<p>In the Old Testament, God said “Israel” was his treasured possession. What happened to Israel?</p>
<p>❸ Promise to David</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ David’s offspring will be king</li> <li>➤ This offspring will be “[God’s] son”</li> <li>➤ God will build a house (ultimately a dynasty)</li> <li>➤ His kingdom will last forever</li> </ul>	<p><i>Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:26-33</i></p> <p>Jesus will 1) be great; 2) be called the Son of the Most High (son of God – special relationship); 3) God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the kingdom forever.</p>	<p>Jesus is the King we have been waiting for. But where is the kingdom?</p>
<p>❹ New Covenant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ God’s law written on human hearts (Holy Spirit)</li> <li>➤ Direct, personal knowledge of God</li> <li>➤ Forgiveness of sins (sins remembered no more)</li> </ul> <p>This includes restoration to the land; and righteousness, peace, and harmony</p>	<p><i>Matthew 26:27-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25; Hebrews 8:3-13</i></p> <p>Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant, and inaugurated (began) it at the last supper. It is “in Jesus” that we have the Holy Spirit, a personal relationship with God, and forgiveness of sins.</p>	<p>Where is the perfect relationship with God? Where is the kingdom of righteousness, peace and harmony?</p>

### Reflection/Application

- Have you become a recipient of God’s promises through faith in Jesus Christ? Do you need to become his follower?
  - As a Christian, what does your “clothing” look like? Are you becoming more like Christ? Reflect on Colossians 3:1-17.
  - Christians have responsibilities in “God’s promise for the nations.” In what ways are you being used to bring God’s blessing to others?
- 📖 “For ‘Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?” (*Romans 10:13-14, NLT*)

# The Seed of Abraham



All Those Who Have Faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:8-9; 26-29)