

Old Testament Survey: 3

Promises, Promises

Genesis 12-50

The Old Testament started off so well, but because of Adam's rebellion creation went out of control and into a cycle of sin and punishment. God practically destroys everything and starts again with Noah. By the time we reach Genesis 11 and the Tower of Babel, creation once again has degenerated to the point where man tries to force his way into heaven. Creation is rotten to the core yet again. So how is God going to deal with it? Will He destroy it once more and start again or try and fix it?

He does it in accordance with His method – God said. He makes promises...

Genesis 12.1-4

God makes Abram some great promises

God promises

- That Abram's descendants will increase and become a great nation. As a guarantee (surety) God changes his name to Abraham (Genesis 17.4-5) which means 'father of many nations'
- To give Abrahams descendants their own land to live in
- To bless His descendants and in turn they would also bring blessing to all families

Genesis 15.1-6

God repeats His promises to Abraham but this time adds another to it

Abraham's heir would be one born from his own body, not his chief slave as the culture allowed and permitted (it was given that the head slave became heir to childless couples). This was Isaac – the son of promise.

These promises to Abraham are majestic acts of the grace of God – through them God commits Himself to reversing the effects of the Fall.

God had created Adam and his wife and had placed them in a 'land' of their own, a garden full of blessing. God's promises to Abraham are about creating a new nation, dwelling in their very own land, whom God would be able to bless abundantly beyond measure. All this would come through a child born to Abraham.

These promises are of great importance – Genesis 15 is probably the greatest chapter in the Old Testament because hereafter everything that happens in the Old Testament has these promises as a backdrop. As we progress with these studies we will discover that

God is at work to fulfil His promises to Abraham – however we will also see the unfaithfulness of man who continually rebels against the plan of God.

“And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” Genesis 15.6

This verse is the key to the chapter and to the whole of the Old Testament. Abraham believed (trusted in, adhered to, to cling on to) God's promises. Even when the circumstances were against him, he did not waver at these promises but trusted God to bring them to pass (Romans 4.20-21)

Abraham is the key figure of the Old Testament, and the New Testament acknowledges this. The New Testament also shows us that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all God's promises (2 Corinthians 1.20) and we can see similarities and links to the way God deals with those of us who are in Christ.

- Faith in God's promises (word)
- Justification through faith
- Saved by (faith in) the incorruptible Word of God.

Galatians 3.1-29

We enter into the promises that God made to Abraham because we are in Christ, we too become the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promises (v29)

The remainder of Genesis traces the stories of the next few generations of the family of Abraham – Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

God's promises continue through Isaac, then Jacob and finishing in the events of Joseph's life.