

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: *Covenant: God's Way of Relationship*



*A Teaching Sermon: "Abram: The Covenant of Promise, Part One"*

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*Teleconference July 5, 2020*

## **The Covenant of Promise: Abram**

God doesn't suggest. God doesn't negotiate. Instead, God solemnly charged Abram, "Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you: and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

I was there, in Haran, in Turkey. This 5,000 year old city is the birthplace of three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and they all started with this mandate to Abram. Abram departed, Genesis 12:4 says, **as the LORD had spoken unto him**. He was 75 years old when he left Haran. He left to go into the land of Canaan. He passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, a 400-mile journey, and again the LORD appeared and said, "Unto your seed will I give this land," and there Abram built an altar unto the LORD. This refers to actual physical descendants, but when we look at Galatians 3:16, Paul notes "seed" as singular. Let's hear it.

<sup>16</sup> Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.<sup>17</sup> And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.<sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Galatians 3:16-18 KJV

So we're talking about a singular collective. What is the significance? By using the singular, God set all promises by our being in One Seed, Christ, to come to fulfillment in Christ. In Christ all the promises are Yes, and through Christ we say our Amen to God for His glory. 2

Corinthians 1:20: **For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ESV**

And in Galatians 3:29: <sup>29</sup> **And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. KJV**

In Genesis 15 we find the formal inauguration of the Abrahamic covenant. And then, in Genesis 17:1, 2 the LORD declares without conversation, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you..." (Genesis 17:1, 2)

God made all these promises to Abram. "How shall I know that I shall inherit the land You have promised?" (Genesis 15:8) Abram believes, but he wants strong assurance. He is old and getting older and has no heir unless he adopts a "son" to become legal heir. God says a son born of Abram's own loins will possess the promises (15:4). How?

God gives assurance by a formal ratification of a covenant bond in blood. Abram is to present certain animals before Him (15:9). He halves the animals and sets the pieces over against each other. He slays the birds, but doesn't divide them. Birds of prey come, but Abram frightens them away. He passes into a visionary state. He receives an overview of history and is encouraged to wait patiently. For 400 years descendants will endure oppression in a strange land and then come out with great possessions. Finally, they will enter the land as promised. (Gen. 15:13, 14) Why the delay? Because the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full (v. 16).

A smoking oven and a flaming torch pass between the pieces (v. 17). God cut the covenant. God pledged Himself to life and death in an action establishing an oath of self-malediction. If the commitment is broken, their own bodies were to be torn in pieces just as the animals had been divided ceremonially. God bound Himself in a solemn blood-oath to the fulfillment of the promises given Abram. The promises are sealed with a self-maledictory oath. This is the strong assurance given.

What is the ultimate fate of the covenant-breaker? His body would be slain and devoured by the wild birds of the heavens. (See also Exodus 24 and Jeremiah 34; Deuteronomy 28, 1 Kings 14:11; 1 Kings 16:4; 1 Kings 21:24; 2 Kings 9:10; Jeremiah 7:33, 16:4, 19:7; Psalm 79:2, 3)

Throughout Israel's history we have this covenantal self-consciousness of the ultimate judgment of devastation. What happens at Sinai reflects the covenantal form employed by God as He bound Himself to Abram. Thus the ceremony of the Mosaic covenant to come will embody the substance of the commitment under Abram, although the form changes from passing between the pieces to the sprinkling of the nation with blood.

Is there any relief from the curse? We find our answer in Hebrews 9:15-20 and in the inauguration of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20). There is a vital relationship between death and covenant. In both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants we have the symbolic representation of the death of the covenant-maker. It doesn't take much to discover the long history of God's terminal judgments on Israel in the light of His execution of the death-curse on covenant breakers.

We have first, the death of the covenant-maker at the time of the inauguration of the covenant. It is a pledge to death. Secondly, we have the death of the covenant-violator. Once a transgression of the covenantal commitment occurs, death is inevitable. Death activates a testament. Death inaugurates and vindicates a covenant.

It is Christ's death which removes transgressions committed under the first covenant. The death of Christ the maker of the new covenant provides redemption from the curses incurred due to the violation of the old covenant. This same death, His "blood of the covenant" inaugurates the new covenant. Christ did not die in order to activate a "will" for Israel. He instituted a covenantal relationship. In Hebrews 9:15 Christ mediates the new covenant in order that those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. By the grace of God, Jesus Christ substituted Himself in the place of covenant-breakers. He died in their stead. He took on Himself the curses of the covenant. There is no remission without the shedding of blood. To dishonor the Blood, to deny it, to demean it, to be ashamed of it is to dishonor and demean the New Covenant.

The dual role of the Blood of Christ echoes the dual role of God's words to Adam in Genesis 3:15. The pronouncement of blessings in the covenant of redemption followed on the heel of the

infliction of the curses of the covenant of creation. Curse for sin, yes, but redemption comes through the promise of blessing in Christ.

Abram did not pass between the divided pieces. Only God passed between the pieces. **God assumed to Himself the full responsibility for seeing that every promise of the covenant would be realized.** Abram is not without obligations and requirements. There were stipulations. He had to leave his father and land. He will have to circumcise all males as the seal of the covenant. He will have to obey. By the grace of God, he did obey; he believed God, and God counted it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Romans 4:20-22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23.

It is by grace, not by works of righteousness we have done. Jesus, the Incarnate Christ, offers Himself when He says, **“Take, eat; this is My Body. This is My Blood of the covenant shed for many. Drink, all of you, of it.”** (Matthew 26:28 and Luke 22:20) Amen.

That we may be prepared, blessing the LORD for His grace and covenantal promises,

## *Mary Craig*

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**“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”**  
Revelation 21:7

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