



Lesson 10

GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM AND DAVID

The first verse of the New Testament describes Jesus as “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). The reason that these two men take such a prominent place is that God made some very important promises to them. We need to know about them to understand the purpose of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham

In Lesson 5 we mentioned that Abram (later renamed Abraham) lived in the idolatrous city of Ur (in modern Iraq), nearly 2,000 years before Christ. There the Lord appeared to him, and said:

“Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing . . . all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1-3).

The apostle Paul makes a comment about this:

*“The Scripture foresaw that God would **justify the Gentiles by faith**, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So **those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith**” (Galatians 3:8,9).*

It is clear that the blessing upon ‘all peoples of the earth’ (Genesis 12) comes especially upon those who, like Abraham, have faith in God. Abram did as the Lord said, and after much travelling, he came to settle in the land of Canaan (where Israel is today). His nephew Lot travelled with him. Following a dispute between their servants, Abram and Lot parted company. Lot chose the well-watered valley of the Jordan, while Abram remained in the hill country. There the Lord appeared to him again, and said,

“Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring for ever . . . Go walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you” (Genesis 13:14-17).

God’s promise was about a land and a people. In the original Hebrew, the word ‘offspring’ is the word for ‘seed’. Paul, inspired by God, comments:

*“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).*

With regard to the land, the promise was never fulfilled. This is underlined for us in a great speech made in Jerusalem by Stephen, after the resurrection of Christ:

*“God sent him (Abraham) to **this land where you are now living**. He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants (Greek: ‘seed’) after him would possess the land . . .” (Acts 7:5).*

We have seen from the Bible (Lesson 2) that death is a sleep. The true Christian hope is resurrection from the dead. Abraham fell asleep, and awaits the day of resurrection, when he will awake and receive the inheritance of the land, as God promised.

“Those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land . . . the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace” (Psalm 37:9,11).

Jesus himself quoted these wonderful words (Matthew 5:5).

Now we shall see how all this has meaning for Christians. Paul writes:

*“You are all sons of God through **faith in Christ Jesus**, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ . . . 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).*

Now we see how necessary the Old Testament is to a proper understanding of the New. Through faith in Christ and baptism we, together with Christ, become heirs of the promises to Abraham. Even though we may die before Christ returns, we shall be resurrected to receive eternal life. *Then* we shall inherit the land, together with all God’s faithful ones, when the meek “shall inherit the earth”.

The Lord Jesus Christ has already received eternal life. When he returns from heaven he will reign as King in Jerusalem, as we have already shown in previous lessons, and his resurrected faithful ones will reign with him on earth (Revelation 5:9,10).

David

Having considered the promises to Abraham, we can now look at the promise to David. It is about the kingship of Jesus. After David became king, about 1000 years before the birth of Jesus, he was troubled by the fact that while he had built himself a fine palace, God was still worshipped in a tent, or tabernacle. This was the same tabernacle that Moses had made in the wilderness after he had brought the Israelites out of Egypt. David told the prophet Nathan of his plan to build a house, or temple, for his God. Nathan was then instructed by God to deliver to David a message, which contained a wonderful promise:

*“. . . the Lord himself will establish a house for you. When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. **He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son** . . . Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:11-16).*

In Lesson 6 we dealt with the later history of the kingdom of Israel. We saw that the kingdom was overthrown because of sin. When the angel appeared to Mary the mother of Jesus, he declared that her son would be called ‘the Son of the Most High’, that he was the one who would restore the ancient kingdom of David and reign over the house of Jacob (or Israel) for ever:

*“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** . . .” (Luke 1:32).*

The birth of Jesus fulfilled a promise made to David a thousand years earlier. So the coming Kingdom of God upon the earth will be the old kingdom of Israel restored.

Finally, God had said that a son of David would build a house for God. Solomon, who succeeded David as king, built a wonderful temple for God. But the house that Christ, the greater son of David, is building, is a temple, not of stones, but of people—God’s people:

“. . . you are . . . fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

In the kingdom to come, there will also be ‘a house of prayer for all nations’ (Isaiah 56:7), the focal point for educating the nations in God’s ways (see Isaiah 2:2-4).

Summary

The Christian hope is bound up with the promises to Abraham and David. God promised Abraham (1) that he and his ‘seed’ would inherit the land, (2) that all peoples would be blessed in him and in his seed, which is Christ. Those who are baptised into Christ share in these promises.

God promised David that his descendant would be the Son of God, and would reign for ever. This promise is fulfilled in Christ. Today, the temple of God is a temple of people. In the age to come there will be a temple in Jerusalem.

Questions

K1 Why are the promises to Abraham important for Christians?

K2 “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

What do you think the disciples meant by this?