



## The Promised One

### God's Promise for the Nations

In the Old Testament period, God made several promises or covenants. Though God made promises to particular people (like Abraham and David), and a particular group of people (Israel), God's central promise (which I have called "God's promise for the nations") has application to all people, including us today. In this course, we have discussed four major promises/covenants<sup>1</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*) – *Mosaic (Sinai) 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>2</sup> This return did not appear to be the restoration foretold by the prophets and promised in the New Covenant. The Jews continued to wait for the promised king, the Messiah (Christ),<sup>3</sup> 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: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham." (*Matthew 1:1*) 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 named "Jesus." Was Jesus the fulfillment of God's "promise for the nations?" Let us consider the four major covenants.



### Covenant with David

About 1000 years before Jesus' birth, God made a promise to King David. When the angel Gabriel told Mary she would have a baby, what did he say about the baby?

- 📖 The angel said to her... "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him 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 Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." (*Luke 1:31-33, NIV*)

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's covenant with David.

<sup>1</sup> Not all of God's promises are in the form of 'covenants' but his major promises and covenants can be tied together.

<sup>2</sup> The Jews' return involved three primary movements (537, 458, and 445 BC). The number of Jews was roughly 70,000.

<sup>3</sup> 'Christ' (*christos*) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew 'Messiah,' which means 'anointed one.'

<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; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (*Matthew 5:17*).<sup>6</sup> Paul wrote, "Christ is the culmination (end and goal) of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." (*Romans 10:4, NIV*).

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel through Moses.

## The 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*)

Jesus is the fulfillment of the New Covenant.

## Promise to Abraham

Almost 2100 years before Jesus' birth, God made a promise to Abraham. God told Abraham, "...through your offspring (seed) all nations on earth will be blessed" (*Genesis 22:18*). After Jesus came, the apostle Paul wrote this: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. 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*).

1. Read Galatians 3:6-9 & 3:26-29. In what way is God's promise to Abraham fulfilled in Jesus? Does this apply to us today? Explain.
2. What does it mean to have "faith in Christ Jesus" (3:26)? If we are "clothed with Christ" and we "belong to Christ" (3:27, 29), how should this affect our daily lives?<sup>7</sup> What do we need to do?

## Reflection & Application

- Are you a "[spiritual] child of Abraham" and a recipient of the blessing? (See page 4). Do you need to trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Do you need to "belong to Christ?"
- Brothers & sisters, being "clothed with Christ" results in change. Reflect on Colossians 3:1-17.
- Christians have responsibilities in "God's promise for the nations." Brothers & sisters, in what ways are you involved in bringing God's blessing to others?

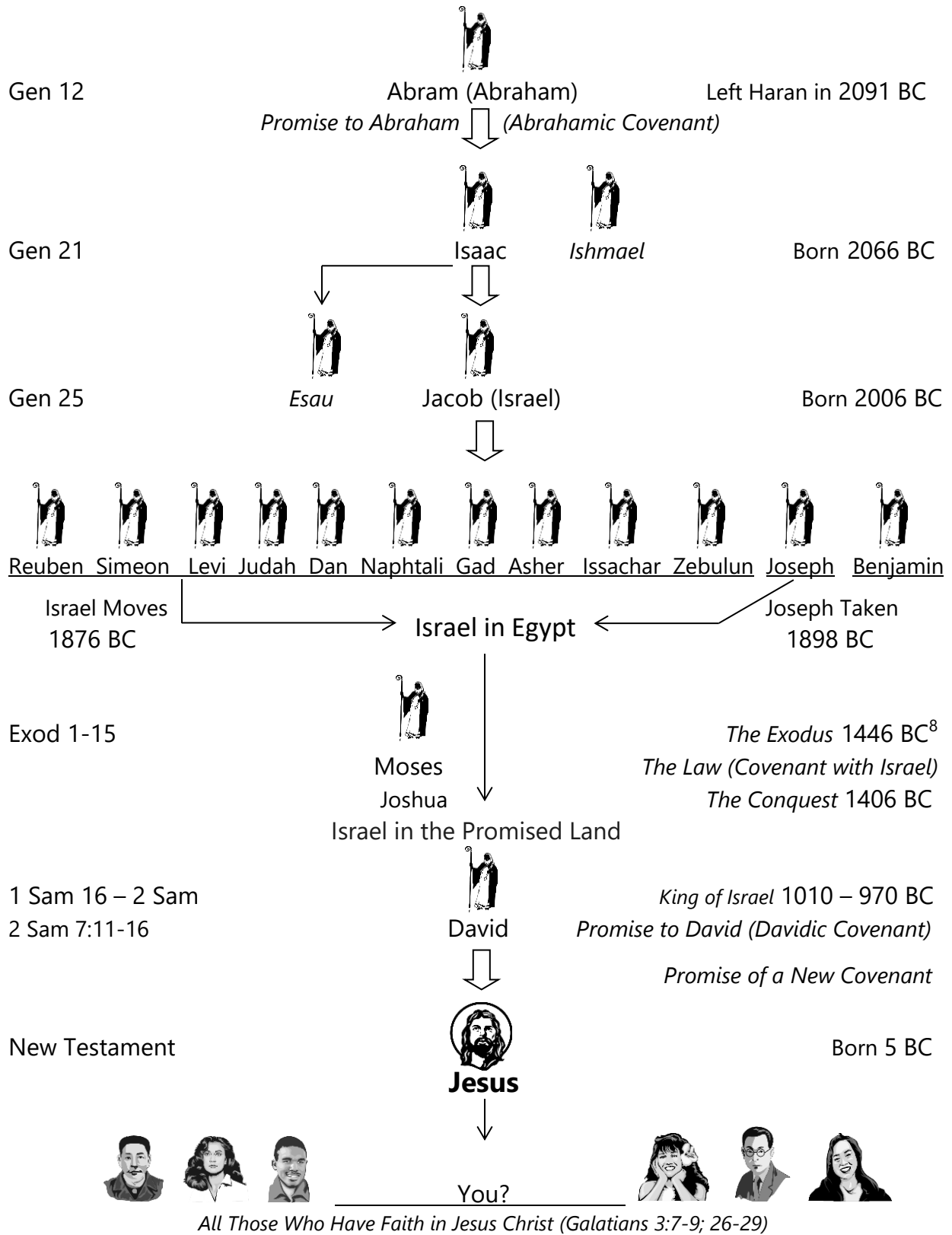
<sup>6</sup> 'the Law [and] the Prophets' refers to the Hebrew Scriptures – that is, the Old Testament (OT) part of the Christian Bible. 'to fulfill (*plēroō*) them' – to bring them to their intended goal. Jesus fulfills the OT Scriptures in that the OT points to Jesus. Jesus did not come to abolish (do away with) or contradict the OT Scriptures, but he did come to change our view of them. As the fulfillment of the OT, Jesus is the sole authoritative interpreter of the OT. (D.A. Carson, *Matthew – Chapters 1-12* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 144.)

<sup>7</sup> 'Faith in Christ' is believing who he is and what he has done, and trusting in him alone for salvation. See Romans 10:9-10. Faith in Christ involves identification with him, which baptism signifies. We must be united with him in his death to be united with him in his resurrection life. See Romans 6:3-7. Our 'old self' must die (*Galatians 2:20*). True faith is to 'be clothed with Christ' and 'belong to Christ,' which should result in a changed life (*Colossians 3:1-17*).

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| Covenant   | Fulfillment in "the Promised One"  | Remaining Questions  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>❶ Covenant with 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 heirs according to 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>Deut. 5:32-33</i>)<br/>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 Covenant with David</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ God will build a house for David (i.e., a dynasty)</li> <li>➤ David's offspring will be king</li> <li>➤ David's offspring will build a house for God</li> <li>➤ This offspring will be "[God's] son"</li> <li>➤ His kingdom will last forever</li> </ul>   | <p><i>Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:26-33; Matthew 16:13-18</i></p> <p>Jesus will be great; be called the Son of the Most High (son of God – special relationship); God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the kingdom forever. Also, Jesus will build a house for God – the Church.</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 indwelling 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> |

# The Seed of Abraham



<sup>8</sup> This is the traditional date for the exodus. Many scholars argue for a later date.