

Biblical Theology

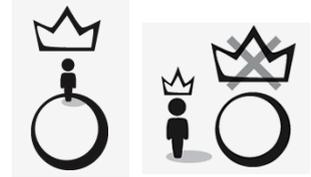
Abraham

Huge figure in NT

Mentioned 14 times in Luke, 8 times in Acts, 9 in Romans, 9 in Galatians

Recap: (Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture*)

1. Pattern of the Kingdom – King over God's people in God's place blessing of his rule¹
2. Perished Kingdom
3. Promised Kingdom



Biblical theology is a biblical thing to do

Acts 7:1-16

- What is emphasised there?
 1. Land of Canaan not the real issue (6:14; 7:48)
 2. Lord appeared to Abraham (7:2) – Gen. 12:7; 15:1; 17:1; 18:

[Also note that exact naming not emphasised in NT – In the OT *Abram* = exalted father; *Abraham* = father of a multitude of nations (Gen. 17:4-5) – In Greek NT always *Abraam*]

Now back to Genesis:

- What are the contrasts between chp. 11 and chp. 12?

The story of Genesis is told in ten parts, divided by the phrase, "This is the account of" or in more literal translations, "These are the generations of..." And those ten divide quite clearly between the first five and the second five at Genesis 11:27.

There are various contrasts between these two halves of Genesis:

- The first half goes wrong with disobedience and exile away from God's presence. By Genesis 11 people are still going away from the East (v2) and still being disobedient (v4). But when we get to Abraham in the next chapter we find obedience and a movement towards God's land.
- Genesis 1-11 is universal ('the nations') but from Genesis 12 there is a focus on God's particular "great nation" (v2).
- While the people at Babel wanted to make a "name" for themselves, now God says, "I will make your name great" (12:3).
- Genesis 1-11 is mainly *curse* with glimpses of blessing. Story of Terah (11:27-32) emphasises death and barrenness. From Genesis 12 there is an emphasis on *blessing* (the word comes 5 times in Gen. 12:1-2 compared to "curse" 5 times in Gen. 3-11).

2:4 - the heavens and the earth
5:1 - Adam
6:9 - Noah
10:1 - Shem, Ham and Japheth
11:10 - Shem

11:27 - Terah
25:12 - Ishmael
25:19 - Isaac
36:1 - Esau
37:2 - Jacob

¹ Very important to notice this connection all the way through the Bible between kingly rule and blessing.

- What are the elements of the Promise given to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-8?

PEOPLE / Nation

PLACE / land

BLESSING / being a blessing to the nations – reminder of Gen. 1:28

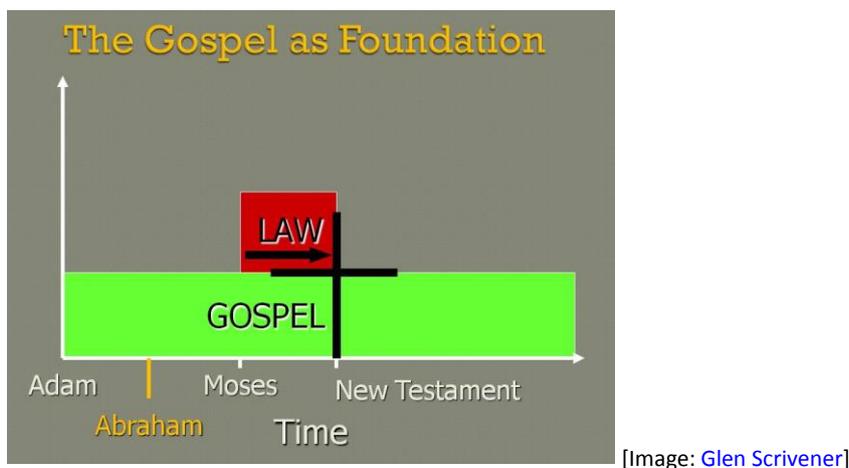
Great name (but then he calls on the Name – v8)

Offspring/descendants/posterity/Seed – goes back to Gen. 3:15 – ‘seed’ mentioned 48 times in Genesis!

Galatians 3

Learn 5 things about the Abrahamic covenant/promise

1. The Abrahamic covenant was a faith covenant – justification by faith from the beginning (v6); the descendants of Abraham have always been those who share his faith (v7, 29)
2. The Abrahamic covenant = the gospel (v8); the Abrahamic covenant blessings are justification (v6-9), the gift of the Spirit (v14), and adoption (v26)
3. The Abrahamic covenant is with Christ from beginning (v16-18) – he is not only the fulfilment of the covenant but a party to the covenant from the start
4. The Abrahamic covenant is underwritten/paid by Christ (v13-14)
5. The Abrahamic covenant comes before, underlies and outlives the Law (v15-29) – the Law is an extra layer on top, a temporary parenthesis to teach Israel certain things



Now back to Genesis:

Genesis 12:10-20 – danger to the seed, notice lots of interactions with Gentiles in Abraham narrative

Genesis 13 – separation (Genesis is a book of separations); repeat of promise v14-18

Genesis 14 – interaction with Gentiles; Melchizedek

1. King – we need a king restore kingdom
2. Of Salem – where the story is all headed
3. Of righteousness – just before ch. 15 – the great chapter of righteousness (also a big issue in ch. 18 and 19)
4. First mention of a priest in the Bible – long before Levitical
5. Blesses – reminds us of blessings of ch. 12

Genesis 15

- Read chapter together with Jeremiah 34:18-19 – what is going on?

Genesis 15 is a key chapter in Genesis (and in the whole Bible) because it is here that we find:

- Covenant – God gave Abram a promise at Genesis 12 but here in chapter 15 the LORD formally ‘cuts’ (makes) the great covenant of grace (v18). Most amazingly, when we compare the strange night-time events of this chapter with the covenant ceremony described in Jeremiah 34:18-19 we see that one party is sleeping (cf. Gen. 2:21) and meanwhile God *alone*, in the form of fire (cf. Ex. 3:2; 13:21; 19:18), passes through the halves animals, taking on the full responsibilities of covenant keeping and of being torn apart if it is broken.
- The Word of the LORD comes to Abram – God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 12 but in chapter 15 we are told twice of the ‘Word of the LORD’ - something (or someone) who will become hugely important as we move through Bible history.
- Stars – The first mention of these since the opening verses of Genesis; suggesting a new creative work (cf. Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 4:6).
- Faith – It was implicit at Genesis 12 but here in Genesis 15 it is explicit (the first use of the word in the Bible).
- Righteousness – We have already heard that Noah was righteous (Gen. 6:9) but here for the first time we find out that righteousness is something that can be credited to someone who simply believes God’s promises.



Gen. 16 – Son of the flesh

- concern for and sovereign providence over the nations (cf. Acts 17:26)

Gen. 17

- With a marriage covenant what are the:
 - Parties?
 - Promises?
 - Sign?
 - Terms?
 - Duration?
- What things do we notice about this covenant in Genesis 17?
 - Parties?
 - Promises?
 - Sign?
 - Terms?
 - Duration?
- Father of a multitude of nations – spiritual international descendants
- Kings – v6, 16 – we need a king to restore the kingdom²
- Offspring, generations, household – v7, 9-14
 - Covenant sign given even to those outside covenant choice – v18-27
- Everlasting covenant – v7, 13, 19

² In some ways Abraham is a kingly figure (Gen. 23:6).

- Is it really an *everlasting* covenant?

Are there 2 peoples of God³ – Israel who physical inherits land (Abrahamic covenant) and the Church which is promised has spiritual blessings (New covenant)?

Compare Lev. 26:40-42; Ezekiel 16:60; 36:24-29; 37:24-28; Luke 1:32-33, 54-55, 71-75 – notice Israel, King, Land, Multitude in the new everlasting covenant. N.B. to ‘remember’ a covenant means to activate it (e.g. Gen. 8:1; Exodus 2:23-25)

So what is the relationship between the Abrahamic everlasting covenant and the New everlasting covenant? Who are they for? Are they two or one?⁴



So what is ‘new’ about the New Covenant? (Jer. 31:31) – it is new in contrast to the Mosaic Law covenant (Jer. 31:32), in outpouring of Spirit and priesthood of all believers (Jer. 31:34)

Romans 4

- Always been justification by faith (v3,11-13,22-25) - we justified in same way he was
- Abraham was uncircumcised (v5)⁵
- Abraham was uncircumcised (v9-11) - Faith before circumcision
- Sign = seal of faith (v11) but given even to children
- Uncircumcised can be ‘circumcised’ children of Abraham if have faith (v12, 16-17 cf. 2:28-29) – confirmation that this is what Gen. 17:5 meant – spiritual international descendants – cf. the tree of Rom. 11:17-24 – one people of God by faith
- Promise of land was promise of world (v13)⁶

Genesis 18-21 – lots of interaction with gentiles, sojourning, son of promise, righteousness, judgement and salvation

Read Genesis 22:

- What are the wonderful pointers to Christ and the Cross here?

Moriah – 2 Chronicles 3:1

James 2:18-24

- Genesis 15 comes before Genesis 22
- Genesis 22 is the fulfilment/outcome/proof of Genesis 15
- Faith produces works – Hebrews 11:17
- Justifying faith is sanctifying faith. If no works then faith was not real saving faith

³ This is the view of classic dispensationalism which arose in nineteenth century America and is represented by the Scofield Study Bible. Some more recent progressive/modified dispensationalists have moved to teach that there is one people of God.

⁴ The position that there is essentially one covenant of grace beginning with Abraham (or perhaps at Gen. 3:15) is called Covenant Theology. Most covenant theologians in the reformed tradition hold that there are two main covenants in the Bible – the covenant of grace and the covenant of works (Mosaic Law). But there are many variations within both the dispensationalist and covenant theology ‘camps’.

⁵ Cf. his interactions with Gentiles and Sarah in Genesis which are often questionable (Gen. 12; 16; 20).

⁶ Cf. Gen. 15:18 where the promise is of far more than Canaan (cf. Psalm 72:8; Zech. 9:10).

Back to Genesis:

Gen. 23 – Why a whole chapter on the burial of Sarah?

1. Concern not to be assimilated into the people of the land by being a receiver from the Gentiles (in debt to them, enmeshed in their system)
2. A sojourner with only tiny footprint in the land (Acts 7:5; Hebrews 11:9-10,13-16) – the tiny footprint is a foretaste and guarantee of the future land
3. And that footprint is a burial ground – emphasis on death – and hope in resurrection (Hebrews 11:17-19)