

Hymns: 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 61 Standing on the Promises  
Scripture: Psalm 105:1-12, 41-45 Psalm 89:28-37

A few weeks ago, I mentioned that we're embarking on a house-building adventure. The latest task was to produce a diagram with the house placed on the lot and to stake out the corners of the house. That would enable us to submit the required survey with the application for a building permit to the Town of Cary. The surveyor was given explicit instructions detailing where to place the house. After he had completed his drawing and placed the stakes out on the property, I went out to meet the builder on the land to see what the house felt like in that position.

I arrived first and was both confused and dismayed by what I saw. While stakes were the right distance from the north border to the side of the house, they were also about twenty-five feet farther back from the road than I had expected them to be. After I had enough time to evaluate the situation and check the measurements, the builder arrived with the diagram that the surveyor had done.

His survey showed the house position 23.5 feet farther from the road than I had specified. Apparently, his research indicated that the **covenants** for the subdivision specified a 60-foot minimum setback from the road right-of-way. My instructions specified a 37.5 foot distance from the right-of-way. The subdivision covenants duly authenticated, registered, and recorded in Wake County book 2144 and page 350 reads as follows:

*4. No dwelling or building shall be located or permitted to exist on any lot nearer than 60 feet to any front or side street line.*

Was the surveyor right? The covenant statement sounds explicit. This is the point where Paul Harvey would say, "Now here's the rest of the story."

*12. These covenants shall run with the land and shall be binding on all parties and persons claiming hereunder **until January 1, 2003 on which date they shall automatically expire.***

It turns out these covenants **expired over ten years ago**. The minimum setback **now** in force is 30 feet as specified by the Town of Cary. The builder and I moved the stakes, and he relayed the needed changes to the surveyor to reflect the desired placement of the house. The building permit application went in the next day. We're on our way. I'll keep you posted.

## **Review**

As you may have guessed, the topic for today's study is *covenant*. Specifically, it's the covenant that God made with Abram and Abraham, and confirmed with Isaac and Jacob. It's the third in our series designed to pick up key Bible topics found in Bible summary passages. We've covered:

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ
2. Israel entering into the Promised Land

This third topic also holds very high importance in scripture. In fact, this covenant speaks of the two points already covered and just mentioned.

Let's first look at the definition of the word *covenant*.

From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary we have the following:

1. *a usually formal, solemn, and binding **agreement***
2. *a written **agreement** or **promise** usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action*

When we study the Bible, another useful indicator with regard to a word is to check its first usage. Can anyone guess where in the Bible the first use of the word *covenant* appears? We still see the sign of this covenant today. That sign appears in the sky. The first usage is in Genesis 6:18, but the description of that *covenant* is in Genesis 9:8-17.

[8] *And God spake unto  
Noah,  
and to his sons with him, saying,  
[9] And I, behold, I establish **my covenant***

Note this **my** covenant stems from God and depends upon Him alone. He then lists the beneficiaries of this covenant:

*with you, [Noah and his sons]  
and with your seed after you; [their descendants (that would include us by the way)]  
[10] And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of  
every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the  
earth.*

[11] *And I will establish **my covenant** with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.  
[12] And God said, This is the **token***

That word *token* is important. Can you think of a covenant that has a specific token? When Betsy and I married, **we** made a covenant to have undying love for each other. As a constant reminder of that covenant, we exchanged wedding rings. The wedding ring is the common token for the marriage covenant in our culture.

*of the **covenant** which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you,  
for perpetual generations:*

Covenants include some indication of the time period that they remain in force or when they expire. The covenant associated with the land we're **building on** expired ten years ago. The marriage covenant expires upon the death of the first to die in that marriage. God's covenants, as in the case of this one, are often never-ending.

[13] *I do set **my bow in the cloud**, and it shall be for a **token** of a **covenant** between me and the earth.  
[14] And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that **the bow shall be seen in the cloud:***

I mentioned this before, but some of you may not have heard it. When I was flying above the clouds (in an airplane of course) I witnessed this in a very different way. The rainbow was indeed in the cloud, but it was upside down. A little research revealed that upside-down rainbows are apparently formed from ice rather than from water vapor and are rarely seen compared to the traditional form.

*[15] And I will remember **my covenant**, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.*

To summarize,

1. The *parties* in covenant were God, Noah, his sons, their offspring, and every living creature on the earth.
2. The *promise* of the covenant is there would never again be a universal, catastrophic flood.
3. The *duration* of the covenant is forever.
4. The *type* of this covenant is unilateral (God only made it, and He makes it happen.)
5. The *token* of the covenant is the rainbow.

With this background, let's press on and consider the Abrahamic Covenant. As we've done before, we'll start with the information we find in the summary passages themselves and move on to greater detail from there:

Psalm 105:8

*[8] He [that is, God] hath **remembered his covenant for ever**,*

Note that this is a “forever covenant,” indicating a never-ending *duration*.

*the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.*

*[9] Which **covenant he made with Abraham**, and his **oath unto Isaac**;*

*[10] And **confirmed the same unto Jacob** for a law, and to Israel*

This covenant was established with Abraham. Hence, we call it the Abrahamic Covenant. It was then confirmed and further described with Isaac and Jacob. These men along with God are the *parties* of this covenant.

*for **an everlasting covenant**:*

Lest there be any doubt, how long does this covenant apply? Unlike the covenant with my subdivision which had an expiration date, this covenant has **no expiration date**. It is everlasting. And it's made by God. You recall we mentioned before that there are things that God cannot do. One of them is that he cannot lie. Therefore, when God makes a promise, you can count on it.

*[11] Saying, Unto thee will I **give the land of Canaan**, the lot of your inheritance:*

This is the *Promised Land* between the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River Valley that we studied **the last** three times we got together. We understand

the land pretty well but we still need to learn more about the *promise*.

Nehemiah 9:7

*[7] Thou art the LORD the God, who didst **choose Abram**, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and **gavest him the name of Abraham**;*

Here we need to look at the name Abram and his new name Abraham.

Abram – exalted father

Abraham – (in the Hebrew language) sounds like “father of a multitude of nations”

In Genesis 17:5, God affirms the reason for the name change was “...*for a father of **many nations** have I made thee.*”

The importance of this point is that part of God's covenant with Abraham involved the *promise* of **many descendants**.

*[8] And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and **madest a covenant with him to give the land** of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, **to his seed**, and hast performed **thy words**; for **thou art righteous**:*

As we saw, a righteous God cannot lie. He does what he says He will do.

Here we have another piece of the Abrahamic Covenant that gives to Israel that “surest deed” to the *Promised Land* that we studied before.

Acts 7:2

*[2] And he [that is, Stephen] said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, [3] And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, **and from** thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.*

*[4] Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him **into this land**, wherein ye now dwell.*

*[5] And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he **promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him**, when as yet he had no child.*

Here again we see the *Promised Land* and *promise* of **descendants after him** to live in it.

*[8] And he gave him **the covenant of circumcision**: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.*

Here we have something new with regard to this covenant. Let's summarize our findings:

1. Between the *parties* God and Abraham
2. The type is *unilateral*
3. An everlasting *duration*
4. *Promises* of
  1. A land
  2. A seed (descendants)
5. Now God gives a *token* associated with descendants the sign of circumcision

Acts 13:23

**[23] Of this man's seed** [referring to David, a descendant of Abraham] *hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:*

**[32] And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers** [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob],

**[33] God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; ...**

We listed two *promises* associated with this covenant:

1. Soil (Promised Land)
2. Seed (descendants)

Now, we have a third promise

3. Savior

For completeness, here's another passage from one of our summaries that applies to this covenant but is a little less direct:

Hebrews 11:17

**[17] By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,**

Earlier today, our dictionary definition referred to a covenant as a *promise*. This is what the writer of Hebrews is referring to when he mentions that Abraham “received the promises.”

You may recall the following list that I gave you three months ago for the Abrahamic Covenant:

- Blessing the world through him: that is, from Abraham through the Savior
- Land in the Middle East
- Multiply his offspring as stars of heaven and sand of the sea
- Circumcision is a sign

That's what we just uncovered from consulting our summaries.

Our next task is to dive into the source passages in Genesis to learn more about how these promises were revealed and what they mean. Because time is short, we'll have to save that for our next get

together.

### Application

Most of you remember the days when you bought a product, you could **trust** that it was fresh, and it would remain usable for a reasonable period of time. Except for a few staples, expiration dates were neither visible nor a matter of concern. These days, expiration dates have moved to the realm of the absurd. It seems today that if I were to go to the store and buy a bag of sand, it would have an expiration date. Yet the items that we buy are less likely to be fresh than when we got them from the baker, the butcher, and the farmer. **Then** we received an implied promise of fresh quality. **Now** we get an expiration date.

It's comforting to know that our covenant-keeping God cannot go back on His word. God is true. When He says "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5) He means it. When He says "no man can pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28) he means it. When the Lord said from the cross "It is finished" (John 19:30), our sin debt was canceled. And when he speaks of the blood of Jesus as His seal of the everlasting covenant (Hebrews 13:20) we can rest in it.

### Benediction

*Now the God of peace,  
that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,  
that great shepherd of the sheep,  
through the blood of the everlasting covenant,  
Make you perfect in every good work to do his will,  
working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,  
through Jesus Christ;  
to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)*

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