

Hymns: 4 Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine 97 Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus
Scripture: Psalm 111 Psalm 105:1-12, 42-45

If you've been following the news lately, you know this has been **another** contentious week in Washington. You may recall about two months ago we looked at a poll regarding the popularity of Congress. The poll, taken by Public Policy Polling at the beginning of this year, found their popularity came in at around eleven percent. To refresh your mind, here's what it said:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE January 8th, 2013

Facing low approval ratings after a historically unproductive 112th session and a series of last-minute showdowns over fiscal matters, Congress is now less popular than [list edited]:

- *root canals,*
- *head lice,*
- *colonoscopies,*
- *traffic jams,*
- *cockroaches,*
- *used-car salesmen*
- *and Brussel sprouts.*

Our friends at Public Policy Polling in Raleigh just took [another poll](#). Unbelievably, the popularity of Congress has descended into **even greater depths**. While Congress is still less popular than the list just mentioned, they have now added even more loathsome things to their list.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE October 8, 2013 [just five days ago]

Americans like Witches, the IRS, and even Hemorrhoids better than Congress

Raleigh, N.C. –

*While Congress remains **divided** amidst the government shutdown, Americans are **united** in their **disapproval** of the legislating body. Of **registered voters polled**, 85% **disapprove** of the job Congress is doing. Only 8% approve...*

While I'm sure there's lots of speculation regarding the reasons for why Congress is so unpopular, one thing is sure. People don't like to be lied to. They don't like it when politicians **promise** one thing and deliver another.

Review

Today we're continuing our study of a particular type of **promise** called a *covenant*. Specifically, it's the covenant that God made with Abram, then with Abraham, and confirmed with Isaac, and Jacob. It's the third in our series designed to pick up key Bible topics as specified in Bible summary passages. We've covered the resurrection of Jesus Christ and Israel entering into the Promised Land. This third topic also holds very high importance in scripture. In fact, this covenant speaks of the those first two points that we've already covered.

Last time, we learned the definition of the word *covenant* as a binding, written agreement or **promise**. We learned the first usage in the Bible of the word *covenant* appears in the Genesis story of Noah. From that story we found the following **five key elements** associated with God's covenant after the flood:

To summarize the elements are:

1. The *parties* in covenant.
2. The *promise* of the covenant.
3. The *duration* of the covenant.
4. The *type* unilateral vs. bilateral.
5. The *token or sign* of the covenant.

We moved on to start looking at the covenant that God made with Abram. From our summary passages, we found **four unique things** associated with it:

1. Soil (Promised Land)
2. Seed (descendants)
3. Sign (circumcision)
4. Savior (Jesus Christ)

With this background, let's press on into this topic of the Abrahamic Covenant and take a look at the verses in the book of Genesis that first describe it **to** learn more about how these promises were revealed and what they mean. We'll take these in **the** order they're given:

The first is

Genesis 12:1-4

It's packed so, we'll dissect it carefully:

[1] *Now the LORD had said unto Abram,*

*Get thee out of thy country, and
from thy kindred, and
from thy father's house,*

God gave Abram clear instructions to leave it all.

*unto a **land** that I will shew thee:*

the land is the first hint of the *soil* part of the promise

[2] *And*

*I will make of thee a great nation, and
That's the *seed**

*I will **ble**ss thee, and*

That's something new that includes physical prosperity. Notice the word *bless* appears five times in just two verses. This is the first time.

make thy name great; and

That's also new – this man is honored by Christians, Jews, and Arabs

thou shalt be a blessing:

That's a hint of the Savior. We're going to look at that key point for today in more detail in a few minutes.

*[3] And I will **bless** them that **bless** thee, and*

That should encourage his friends

***curse** him that **curseth** thee: and*

That word *curse* is the same word used when God cursed the serpent, the earth, and Cain. Those “that curseth thee” are those who look down on him and regard him with contempt. That's not hard to grasp as the Jews have many enemies among nations and individuals who hate them.

*in thee shall all families of the earth be **blessed**.*

Remember this phrase. We shall see next that this refers to the the coming Savior.

[4] So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Oops. God told him to leave his kindred behind. What's he doing taking Lot with him? While Abram obeyed God in leaving, he messed up on this point. The Bible presents real people, warts and all. Abram was a real person and as do we, he had his failings also.

Now we know that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. Let's look at **what** the Apostle Paul says about this topic:

Galatians 3

Note all of the references to the words: *faith*, *bless*, *curse*, *promise* or *covenant*, and *Abraham* (the new name that God gave to Abram).

*[6] Even as **Abraham** **believed** God, and **it** was accounted to him for righteousness.*

Here we have a core principle of Christianity.

*[7] Know ye therefore that they which are of **faith**, the same are the children of **Abraham**.*

Here the Bible explicitly says that *believers* are Abraham's children or *seed*.

*[8] And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [non-Jews] through **faith**, preached before the gospel*

We know the gospel revolves around belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How could that possibly be given in Genesis?

Let's read on.

unto **Abraham**, saying, *In thee shall all nations be **blessed**.*

Does that sound familiar?

That's what we just read in Genesis 12:3. It's saying this promise refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[9] *So then they which be of **faith** are **blessed** with **faithful Abraham**.*

The Apostle Paul carefully, methodically builds his case. We believers receive a blessing through this covenant also.

[10] *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the **curse**: for it is written, **Cursed** is every one that continueth not in **all things** which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

The book of the law is the Pentateuch or the first five books of the Bible.

Notice the use of the word *curse*, because the law makes us all lawbreakers.

[11] *But **that no** man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by **faith**.*

That's a precious promise to hold on to in our time of need.

[skipping]

[13] *Christ hath redeemed us from the **curse** of the law, being made a **curse** for us: for it is written, **Cursed** is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

There's that word *curse* again.

Jesus Christ bore the **curse** that we deserved so we may be saved from it.

[14] *That the **blessing** of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the **promise** of the Spirit through faith.*

We've made it to the core principle.

Our faith in Jesus Christ marks Christians as recipients of the blessing given to Abraham.

[skipping again]

[16] *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.*

Here we have more clear teaching. Jesus Christ is the *seed* that was spoken of in the covenant God made to Abraham. Notice too the distinction between singular and plural tells us to be very careful as we read and interpret the Bible because it was carefully and precisely written.

[17] *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.*

Do you remember a couple times back we made note of this when we looked at Moses how the covenant of faith predates the old covenant of the law?

[18] *For **if** the inheritance **be** of the law, it is no more of **promise**: but God gave it to **Abraham** by **promise**.*

Our blessing of the gospel is assured because the **promise** of God cannot be broken.

What did this passage teach us?

1. Righteousness comes by faith.
2. Those who put their faith in the Savior are Abraham's children.
3. Christ redeemed believers from the curse of the law.
4. Christ **was** made a curse for believers by His work on the cross.
5. Christ is the seed in the promise made to Abram (and Abraham).
6. This covenant predates the covenant of the law.

With that understanding, let's move on to our next passage.

Genesis 13:12-17

[12] Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain [that is, the plain of Jordan most likely near the Dead Sea], and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

[13] But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

[14] And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him,

Notice how the Lord specifically directed his promise to Abram and didn't even give it to him until Lot was gone.

Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

*[15] For all the land which thou seest, to **thee** will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.*

We see that the Lord has gotten a bit more specific about where that land is that Abram and his seed will inherit.

It's not uncommon to be able to see mountains at a distance of a hundred miles or more. That would lead us to believe Abram could have seen a hundred miles or so north and a hundred miles or so south, depending on his position, the local atmosphere, and the topography. That would make Israel a few hundred miles long.

*[16] And I will make thy **seed** as the dust of the earth: so that **if** a man can number the dust of the earth, **then** shall thy **seed** also be numbered.*

Earlier the Lord promised a great nation, but now he amplifies that promise with an expression of enormous size. Even after 4000 years with all of his learning and technology man is still unable to number the dust of the earth.

[17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

This is that **surest deed** that we talked about before. Notice too that the size of this land is such that a man **could** walk the length and width of it. Indeed, the land of Israel is about fifty miles or so wide and a few hundred miles long. A man can walk about twenty-five miles per day on level ground, or maybe five miles a day in the mountains.

The fictional Forrest Gump ran across the USA. Many people have walked across the 3000-mile span of this country. Some made it in about 100 to 200 days. The record that includes running is about 45 days. The point is, Abram could easily have walked the length and width of Israel in a matter of weeks.

Let's summarize what we have learned that the Lord promised:

1. Land
2. Great nation
3. Blessing to him
4. Blessing to his friends
5. Blessing to all nations (through Jesus Christ)
6. Cursing to his enemies
7. Innumerable descendants

We'll stop there for now, but we have much more to study about this covenant – the sign, the duration, the type of covenant. Next time we meet, by special request, we'll take a brake from this study and look as we did last year at Halloween from a Biblical perspective. Then we'll pick this up again the time after that.

Before we go, let's think about what this covenant means to us. As we read earlier, when the Lord showed Abram the land, Abram must have been in a place where he could look out and see for miles. Perhaps it was a mountaintop, a ridge, or even a cliff.

That cliff brings to mind a story you may have heard in the news recently. Apparently a 22-year old newlywed woman used a somewhat novel means to end her one-week-old marriage to her 25-year-old husband. According to an [ABC News report](#), on July 7th Jordan Linn Graham pushed her husband Cody Nathaniel Johnson off of a cliff at Glacier National Park near their home in Montana. The woman was charged with second-degree murder.

Application

It didn't take long for Jordan Linn Graham to break the promise she made to her husband. Our elected representatives routinely break their campaign promises.

Thankfully, our God is not at all like that. Rather than break His promises, He is faithful and just to keep them. Rather than leave us without hope or push us off of a cliff, He adopted us into His family by the sacrifice His Son made on another hill (or maybe the same hill) called Calvary. He gave His life that we might have eternal life.

We can be very discouraged with our leaders or others, but we can take comfort that the headaches and heartaches of this life are only temporary. Someday, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this earth to rule and reign on the throne of David. His promised kingdom will be founded on truth, goodness, righteousness, and holiness. And His throne and the brightness of His glory will be everlasting. As we compare Him to what we endure today, we can only say come quickly Lord Jesus.

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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