

Genesis 12:1-9—Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” ⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

The promise of the land for what would become the nation of Israel, pointed to something far greater It points to the Jerusalem that is above, the city of God; it is the promise of Heaven and ultimately it speaks to the hope of the New Heavens and Earth, the final dwelling place of God with His Redeemed People. Pray that the hope of the New Heavens and Earth will be strengthened in our hearts.

THE PROMISE OF THE LAND ASSUMED IN THE COVENANT OF GRACE

A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered. When God enters into a covenantal relationship with men, he sovereignly institutes a life-and-death bond. A covenant is a bond in blood, or a bond of life and death, sovereignly administered, means that God alone administers the provisions, restrictions, laws and punishments of the covenant. It is not God and man coming together to hammer out an agreement.

Genesis 15:7-21—And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” ⁸ But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” ⁹ He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹² As the sun was going down, a

deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." ¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

THE PROMISE OF LAND IS THE PROMISE OF A CITY

Hebrews 11:8-10—*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*

2 Chronicles 6:4-6—*when Solomon becomes king he addresses the people to bless them "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying, ⁵ 'Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there, and I chose no man as prince over my people Israel; ⁶ but I have chosen Jerusalem that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.'*

But this earthly city, where God placed His earthly temple and place his name would fail too. When the promised Christ came into the world, He was rejected by the Jewish rulers and priests in Jerusalem. Jesus was rejected and was crucified just outside of Jerusalem. So Paul, eager to spread the see the Galatian churches turn back from a false gospel of works, gives the allegory from biblical history **Galatians 4:21-26**—*Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a*

free woman. ²³ *But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.* ²⁴ *Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.* ²⁵ *Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.* ²⁶ *But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.*

The Jerusalem that is above is the Heavenly places where the Father is, where Christ is seated on God's throne. From the moment Christ died, the Christian's religious interest in the earthly city of Jerusalem died with it. The purpose of earthly Jerusalem was to point us to the reality of Christ and the heavenly Jerusalem. In Christ the reality entered history. We have obtained the reality by faith. To have a *religious* interest in Jerusalem now is to miss a very important point, that the whole function of the types and shadows (of which Jerusalem was always one) was to direct believers to Christ. Abraham worked for Jesus. Moses worked for Jesus (see Hebrews 2). David worked for Jesus. Their hope was never ultimately in the earthly city of Jerusalem. It was always in the heavenly city. The earthly city of Jerusalem is still in slavery. The Jerusalem above is free. The heavenly city is our motherland.

THE PROMISE OF THE HEAVENLY CITY IS THE CALL TO LEAVE THIS FALLEN WORLD

God's call to Abram was to go from somewhere to a place He would designate. The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. You must see this as a call to holiness and repentance—flee this broken sinful world become part of a community of faith.

1 John 2:15-17—*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶ *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.* ¹⁷ *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

Revelation 21:1-4—*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* ³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."* ⁴ *He will wipe away every*

tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 22:12-21—*“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. 15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. 16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” 17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. 18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*