

To Your Seed I Will Give This Land

The Abrahamic Covenant, Paul, and Galatians 3:16

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From Genesis to Revelation, one of the most consistent threads in the biblical narrative is God's covenant with Abraham. This covenant includes a land, a people, and a promise of blessing to the nations. In a world where replacement theology and supersessionist readings continue to undermine the physicality and continuity of these promises, it is essential to revisit the text itself and reaffirm what Scripture actually says: the land promise was made to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And while Paul shows us that this promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, he never revokes or redefines what God plainly declared.

1. God's Promise to Abraham

God's covenant with Abraham begins with an unmistakable and tangible promise—a land given to his physical descendants:

I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Genesis 17:8).

Earlier in Genesis, the Lord had already ratified this with a formal covenant, detailing the geographic boundaries:

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18).

This was not a metaphor. It was a promise rooted in geography, history, and posterity.

2. God's Promise to Isaac

The covenant was not merely a private promise between God and Abraham—it was passed on intentionally through Abraham's chosen son, Isaac. God reaffirms the land promise directly to Isaac:

Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham (Genesis 26:3).

The covenant is now multigenerational. It is a promise rooted in family lineage, not in abstract spiritual principles.

3. God's Promise to Jacob

God reaffirms the same promise to Jacob, Isaac's son, continuing the covenantal line through which the land promise would be secured:

I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants (Genesis 28:13).

Later, God reiterates it once more to Jacob:

The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you (Genesis 35:12).

At this point in the biblical narrative, the land promise is a firmly established, three-generation commitment from God to a specific people.

4. Fulfillment and Continuation of the Promise

Even after centuries and exile, God continued to affirm His intention to fulfill the land promise. Speaking to Moses, God declared:

I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord (Exodus 6:8).

And Moses, just before Israel enters the land, reminds the people of this same covenant:

by loving the Lord your God... that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

At no point is the promise revoked, reinterpreted, or spiritualized. It remains a forward-looking, literal commitment.



Jacob's Ladder

5. Theological Significance of the Land Covenant

The land covenant is not merely a historical note in Israel's past; it is an ongoing and foundational element of God's redemptive plan. It serves as the geographical anchor for God's dealings with the physical descendants of Abraham. While the New Testament expands the promise to include all nations through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:16), it does not negate the specific covenant made to Abraham's natural offspring.

This leads us to Paul's provocative and often misunderstood statement in Galatians.

6. What Paul Meant in Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ (Galatians 3:16).

At first glance, this seems to suggest that Paul is limiting the Abrahamic promise exclusively to Jesus, thereby excluding the nation of Israel. But this would be a horrific misunderstanding that must ignore the numerous texts throughout the Bible that include both the nation of Israel and the Messiah, their ultimate representative. Paul's point is not exclusivist; he is highlighting that it is only through the Messiah that any of the promises to Israel will ever be ultimately fulfilled.

Paul focuses on the singular form of "seed" to highlight that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant. He is not saying that the promise bypasses Israel. He is saying that it is through Christ—the true Seed—that the promises are confirmed and expanded.

Just a few verses later, Paul writes:

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:29).

This means that Gentiles, through faith in Christ, are grafted into the covenantal blessings of Israel. But this inclusion does not nullify the original promises to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Instead, it reveals the Messiah as the hinge upon which those promises swing open to the nations.



Abraham Saw My Day

7. Paul Defends Israel's Ongoing Role

In *Romans 9–11*, Paul affirms in no uncertain terms that the Jewish people still have a future in God's plan:

They are Israelites, to whom belong the adoption as sons, and the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law... and the promises (Romans 9:4).

The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).

If Paul meant in Galatians 3 that Israel is no longer a part of the covenant, then Romans 9–11 becomes not just confusing—it becomes incoherent. Paul holds both truths together: Jesus is the fulfillment, and Israel still has a role to play.

8. The Covenant Has Both Particular and Universal Dimensions

The Abrahamic covenant was always meant to be both local and global.

- *Particular:* God gave the land to Abraham's physical descendants through Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 17:8, 26:3, 28:13). This promise remains unrevoked.
- *Universal:* Through Abraham's seed—ultimately Christ—all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18).

In Galatians, Paul is emphasizing the *universal* blessing. He is not denying the *particular* land promises, but illuminating how Gentiles come to share in the blessings through union with the Messiah.

Christ the Fulfillment, Not the Cancellation

Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:16 is not a supersessionist doctrine. It is a Christ-centered reading of the Abrahamic promise. Jesus is the Seed through whom all of God's promises—land, nation, kingdom, King and global blessing—are confirmed and expanded. The land promise still stands. The covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is still intact. And through Christ, the blessing of Abraham has now reached the nations, without ever displacing the physical children of the promise.



Messiah, King of the Whole World

