

## 5. Children of the Promise (2Q 2021—The Promise: God’s Everlasting Covenant)

**Biblical Material:** Gen. 15:1–3, Isa. 25:8, 1 Cor. 2:9, 1 Pet. 2:9, Gen. 11:4, Gen. 12:2; Matt. 28:20.

### Quotes

- In the same way the sun never grows weary of shining, nor a stream of flowing, it is God’s nature to keep His promises. Therefore, go immediately to His throne and say, “Do as You promised.” *Charles Spurgeon*
- Grow in the root of all grace, which is faith. Believe God’s promises more firmly than ever. Allow your faith to increase in its fullness, firmness, and simplicity. *Charles Spurgeon*
- I build on Christ, the rock of ages; on his sure mercies described in his word, and on his promises, all which I know are yea and amen. *John Wesley*
- The Scriptures contain many stories of people who waited years or even decades before the Lord’s promises came to pass. What modern believers can learn from the patience of biblical saints like Abraham, Joseph, David, and Paul is that waiting upon the Lord has eternal rewards. *Charles Stanley*
- Hope is trust in God’s promises, faith that if we act now, the desired blessings will be fulfilled in the future. *James E. Faust*
- The future is as bright as the promises of God. *William Carey*

### Questions

Why is it so important for us to identify ourselves as “children of the promise”? In what way does God’s promise to Abraham apply to us today? How can we avoid becoming arrogant in our claims (see John 8:33)? On what is the promise really based today? How do we transpose these Old Testament ideas into our world today?

### Bible summary

Gen. 15:1–3 is Abraham’s complaint that he does not have a true heir in the form of a son. In Isa. 25:8 God promises to wipe the tear from every eye. 1 Cor. 2:9 states (quoting Isaiah): “No one has ever seen, and no one has ever heard, and no one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” We are “a specially-chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” (1 Pet. 2:9 FBV). Gen. 11:4 described the plans of the builders of the Tower of Babel. In Gen. 12:2 God promises to bless Abraham. Jesus promises to be with his people until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20).

### Comment

While the Old Testament is interesting for its history and cultural description, what we most want to learn is what it means for us today. So when it comes to being “children of the promise” we want to see how that applies to us. The promise God made to Abraham was not just to him. It was for us too, especially in the form of his descendant Jesus!

Just like God’s “chosen people” of the past, we too can come to believe that there is something special about us, that we are “intrinsically more valuable” than others. After all, the chosen people argue, there must be something about us that God loves, and so we start looking at ourselves with pride and self-satisfaction that God chose us. However, as the history of Israel demonstrates, God did not chose them because they were “better” than other, and in fact God

went out of his way to try to win the other nations too. The only reason we or anyone else is “better” is because of God’s blessings and help.

The central aspect of this study is on the meaning and importance of the promise. God’s promise to bless us now and to provide us with a future than is truly unimaginable points to what is really important—the nature and character of God. Because we are so swamped by sin and evil, and find it so difficult to trust, God gives us many, many promises.

Even those promises change over time because of who we are. God’s promise to give Abraham many descendants and to be the father of many nations is not something we really look for today! However at the time this kind of promise was very significant, and a true blessing. The most important aspect, however, was not the many descendants Abraham would have but that he would be the forefather of Jesus, God’s best promise and hope for humanity.

So we need to come back to our concepts of God, not focusing on ourselves. While we are indeed children of the promise, it is God who is doing the promising! Our role is to accept and believe the promise, and look to our promise-making God. The great danger is looking to ourselves, and becoming proud of who we are—whether we call ourselves “the remnant” or “the true church” or “the commandment keepers”...

In the words of Charles Spurgeon, famous English preacher of the nineteenth century, “*I looked at Christ and the dove of peace flew into my heart. I looked at the dove and it flew away.*”

We need to keep our eyes fixed on God. “We should keep on looking to Jesus, the one who begins and completes our trust in God.” Hebrews 12:2 FBV.

### **Ellen White comments**

This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it, and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness... The covenant of grace is not a new truth, for it existed in the mind of God from all eternity. This is why it is called the everlasting covenant. There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today. . . . Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the author and the finisher of our faith. {FLB 77.6}

Often the Israelites seemed unable or unwilling to understand God’s purpose for the heathen. Yet it was this very purpose that had made them a separate people and had established them as an independent nation among the nations of the earth. Abraham, their father, to whom the covenant promise was first given, had been called to go forth from his kindred, to the regions beyond, that he might be a light bearer to the heathen. Although the promise to him included a posterity as numerous as the sand by the sea, yet it was for no selfish purpose that he was to become the founder of a great nation. . . . “I will bless thee,” Jehovah declared, “and make thy name great; . . . in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” . . .

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. . . . Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan’s influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. {CC 236.4}