

DICTIONARY
of the
NEW TESTAMENT Use
of the OLD TESTAMENT

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EDITED BY

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to have his people dwell with him in his holy space. Against this backdrop, one finds surprising continuity between the concept of priesthood in both the OT and NT. In Christ, the intentions of the Levitical priesthood are both revealed and ultimately fulfilled.

See also Adam, First and Last; Image of God; Temple

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DANA M. HARRIS

Promises

To promise is to assure that one will do a particular thing or that a certain thing will happen, whether good or bad. God's promises of blessing and curse play a key role in helping believers grow in sanctification (2 Pet. 1:4; cf. 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 3:2–3) and suffer with hope (Ps. 119:50). Promises are one of Scripture's unifying motifs, and some scholars have even argued that divine promise is *the* theological center of the Christian canon (Kaiser, *Theology; Promise-Plan*). This article considers the language and form of biblical promises, overviews the major divine promises in Scripture, examines the conditional yet irrevocable nature of promissory covenants like the Abrahamic (Gal. 3:17–18), and offers guidance on how Christians should appropriate all God's promises as yes in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20).

The Language and Form of Biblical Promises

The OT employs the *piel* verb *dbr* ("to speak") or, less commonly, the *qal* verb *'mr* ("to say") in the sense of "to promise." Foster McCurley (402n2) and Walter Kaiser (*Theology*, 33) have identified the use of *dbr* in relation to the promises of land (Exod. 12:25; Deut. 9:28; 12:20; 19:8; 27:3; Josh. 23:5, 10), blessing (Deut. 1:11; 15:6), the multiplication of Israel (6:3; 26:18), rest (Josh. 22:4; 1 Kings 8:56), all good things (Josh. 23:15), and a Davidic dynasty and throne (2 Sam. 7:28; 1 Kings 2:24; 8:20, 24–25; 1 Chron. 17:26; 2 Chron. 6:15–16; Jer. 33:14). Scripture also employs the noun *dābār* ("word, thing") in relation to the Lord's promise to/through Abraham (Ps. 105:42) and Moses (1 Kings 8:56). The LXX uses the verb *epangelomai* ("to promise") and noun *epangelia* ("promise") rarely (but see Esther 4:7; Ps. 55:9 [LXX 56:8]; Prov. 13:12; Amos 9:6). Nevertheless, they are common in the NT, often being used in relation to the promises God gave the patriarchs and Israel in the OT (see Rom. 9:4; 15:8; Eph. 2:12; Heb. 7:6; 11:17; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:12), which in turn are made better in the new covenant through Christ (Heb. 8:6; 10:23). For example, the verb occurs in relation to God's varied promises concerning Abraham (Acts 7:5; Rom. 4:21; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 6:13; 11:11), eternal life (Titus 1:2; James 1:12; 1 John 2:25), believers' kingdom inheritance (James 2:5), and the day of his appearing as judge (Heb. 12:26). Kevin Conway convincingly argues that Paul is unique in his exclusive use of *epangelia* for divine promises and that the conceptual and linguistic correspondence with *euangelion* ("gospel") grounded in the Abrahamic promises drive the apostle's application.

God's Major Promises in Scripture

God's promises commonly relate to life and death, blessing and curse. Divine provision, protection, and presence characterize the blessing of life, whereas the Lord removes all three of these in the curse of death.

Prior to his establishing the old covenant with Israel, Yahweh promises hope and dread without any evident prophetic mediation. From Moses forward, however, human agents arbitrate most divine promises.

God's first explicit promise in Scripture clarifies the reason why he permits Adam and Eve to eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge pertaining to good and evil: "When you eat from it you will certainly die" (Gen. 2:17). Following their disobedience, Adam and Eve's spiritual death and God's exiling them from the garden prove the Lord's faithfulness to his word (3:22–24). But even prior to punishing them, Yahweh curses the serpent and promises him that there will be enmity with the woman and between his offspring and hers and that one of her male descendants will, through tribulation, triumph over him, thus reconstituting creation under God (3:15). From this point forward, redemptive history discloses a progressive hope in this

coming offspring and in the age of global reconciliation with God that he will ignite.

While there are earlier foreshadowings (e.g., Gen. 9:25–27), Scripture next anticipates the curse’s reversal in God’s promises to the patriarchs, which relate to (1) progeny (seed), (2) property (land), (3) blessing or curse, and (4) divine presence.

1. *Progeny.* God will grow the patriarchs into a great nation (Gen. 12:2; 18:18; 46:3), give numerous offspring (15:5; 17:2, 6; 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:3, 14; 48:4, 16), and raise up kings from their midst who will exert influence over nations (17:6, 16; 25:23; 35:11; 49:10). In time, Abraham’s fatherhood will expand adoptively to include not only the single nation of Israel but also the nations more broadly (17:4–6, 16) when a single, male descendant rises and blesses the world (22:18; cf. Acts 3:25–26; Gal. 3:14, 16, 29; Collins, “Syntactical”; “Galatians 3:16”; Alexander; DeRouchie and Meyer; DeRouchie, “Counting”).
2. *Property.* The Lord promises not only that he will give the patriarchs the land of Canaan as their central state (Gen. 17:8), with their broader kingdom reaching from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (15:18–21; cf. Deut. 1:7; 1 Kings 4:20–21; Ps. 80:11), but also that a royal deliverer will expand the kingdom turf to include the rest of the world (Gen. 22:17–18; 26:4–5; 28:14; cf. Ps. 2:7; Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13; Eph. 6:3). These realities are now inaugurated in Christ’s first coming and will be consummated in the new heavens and new earth (Williamson, “Promise”; Martin).
3. *Blessing and curse.* God promises to bless Abraham and his offspring through Sarah (Gen. 12:2; 17:16; 22:17; 24:1; 25:11; 26:3, 12, 24, 29; 27:27–29; 28:3–4; 32:29; 48:3, 16, 20; 49:25–26). Moreover, the Lord will bless those who bless the patriarchs or those associated with them, whereas he will curse the one who curses them (12:3; 27:29). Ultimately, Yahweh will use one of Abraham’s male offspring to overcome God’s enemies (22:17b; 24:60; cf. 3:15) and to bless some from all the families/nations of the earth (22:18; cf. 12:3; 18:18; 26:4; 28:14; Schnabel; DeRouchie, “Blessing-Commission”).
4. *Divine presence.* From the beginning, Scripture associates God’s blessing with humanity’s ability to represent God rightly in the world (Gen. 1:28). God’s favor alone provides a context for flourishing; curse brings only tragedy. In such a context, Yahweh affirms that he will be present with the patriarchs and their offspring (9:27; 28:15, 20; 31:3, 5, 42; 46:4; 48:21).

Conway (48, 145–223) tags Gen. 12:1–3 “the keystone passage in all of Scripture for the promises of God” and

rightly identifies how much these promises shape the NT understanding of the gospel. Indeed, nearly all other biblical promises from Genesis to Revelation in some way relate to these patriarchal promises. God fulfills some promises in a single event (e.g., the coming of a specific offspring), whereas others are realized progressively (e.g., the land[s] promise and the promise of blessing reaching the nations) (cf. Heb. 11:13, 33, 39). Most of the patriarchal promises are initially and partially fulfilled in the Mosaic covenant (e.g., nationhood in the promised land with various material blessings to neighboring nations), but all are ultimately and completely fulfilled through Christ and the new covenant (e.g., God’s overcoming the curse with universal blessing and a global kingdom in the new heavens and new earth).

Genesis 12:1–3 already anticipates this two-stage fulfillment in the way it associates Yahweh’s promises to Abraham with two different imperatives: “Go . . . and be a blessing” (AT). When Abra(ha)m “goes” to the land, the Lord will make him into a great nation, bless him, and make his name great (12:1–2), whereas only when he (or his representative) is a channel of God’s blessing will Yahweh bless those who bless him and curse the one who curses him and ultimately bless all the families of the ground in him (12:2–3; for the syntax and theology, see Williamson, *Sealed*, 78–79; DeRouchie, *Understand*, 209–11, 247–50; Gentry and Wellum, 266–81). We then see that Abraham will shift from being the father of one nation in the land (Gen. 17:7–8) to the father of a multitude of nations in many lands (17:4–6; 26:4–5) only when the single, male offspring arises to overcome enemies and to bring the promised blessing (22:17b–18; 24:60). This coming royal deliverer will rise from the tribe of Judah (49:8–10), generate a second exodus and flourishing creation (Num. 24:5–9), execute global domination (24:17–19), be a prophetic covenant mediator like Moses (Deut. 18:15–19; 34:10–12), judge the ends of the earth on Yahweh’s behalf (1 Sam. 2:10), operate as a priest-king forever over a sure dynasty (2:35), and reign eternally on the Davidic throne as God’s son (2 Sam. 7:12–16). He will in every respect be “God with us” (Isa. 7:14), enjoying Yahweh’s presence like a movable temple-palace, working peace, righteousness, and justice from Yahweh’s holy mountain over a global and multinational kingdom and healing and instructing all who surrender (9:6–7; 11:1–10; 42:1–7; 50:1–11; 61:1–3; cf. Ps. 2:7). He will represent Israel and save some from both Israel and the other nations (Isa. 49:1–12) and will triumph through tribulation, counting sinners righteous while bearing their iniquities (53:11). These are the types of promises that the NT sees fulfilled in Jesus and teaches Christians to claim as their own through him (e.g., 2 Cor. 1:20 with 6:16–7:1).

A Conditional, Irrevocable Promissory Covenant

Because all divine-human relationships in Scripture include promises, they are, at one level, all “covenants

of promise” (Eph. 2:12 ESV). At another level, however, aspects of the Abrahamic covenant bear a distinctive promissory quality that Paul identifies as different from the Mosaic law covenant (Gal. 3:17–18; cf. Rom. 4:13–14). Variances like this have long led scholars to wrestle with the level of conditionality and revocability in the biblical covenants and their relationship to ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties and royal grants (e.g., Mendenhall; Freedman; Weinfeld; Kaiser, *Theology*, 86–94; Waltke; Dumbrell; Blaising; Knoppers; Horton, 23–110; Williamson, *Sealed*, 17–43; Gentry and Wellum, 68n60, 451, 455, 662–66). In suzerain-vassal treaties, a sovereign elected to enter into a relationship with a lower party and vowed to protect and provide for the vassal so long as the vassal remained loyal. Thus, the suzerain-vassal treaties were both conditional and revocable. Royal grants, too, bore obligation for every generation, but the promises that shaped the grant appear to have been irrevocable or perpetually binding and therefore ensured that the promised land or kingship would stay in the family, even if certain individuals forfeited their participation in the covenant blessings by disloyalty (cf. Weinfeld, 189–90, with Knoppers, 683–92).

Yahweh’s use of two-part conditional constructions clearly identifies the qualified nature of certain Mosaic covenant promises: “If you obey, then I will bless” (Lev. 26:1–13; Deut. 28:1–14; cf. Lev. 18:5), but “if you disobey, then I will curse” (Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 28:15–68). And because Israel is stubborn, unbelieving, and rebellious (e.g., Deut. 9:6–7, 23–24; 10:16; cf. 29:4) and will remain so (31:16, 27), Moses knows that the old covenant he mediates will only condemn Israel (31:17–18, 29; cf. 4:25–29; Rom. 7:10; 2 Cor. 3:7, 9) and that God will need to establish a better covenant through a new prophetic covenant mediator (Deut. 18:15–19; cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; 12:24; see DeRouchie, “Condemnation”). Thus, built into the Mosaic covenant are restoration promises that anticipate a new covenant that will supersede the old, ultimately in Christ (Lev. 26:40–45; Deut. 4:30–31; 30:1–14; cf. Jer. 31:31–34; Gal. 3:23–26; Heb. 8:6–13; 10:11–18).

As for the Abrahamic covenant, we have already noted the conditional nature of Yahweh’s initial promises: the patriarch needs to “go” to the land and there “be a blessing” for the curse to be overcome and the world blessed (Gen. 12:1–3). We see a similar structure when the Lord commissions Abra(ha)m to “walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly” (17:1–2 ESV; cf. 26:3). Abraham (or his representative) needs to follow God and remain above reproach in order for the covenantal promises to be realized. Nevertheless, other texts make equally explicit that the promises *will be realized*. Such is made clear through Yahweh’s self-imprecatory oath sign and promise in Gen. 15:17–21 (see Kline, 16–17, 41–42; Hugenberger, 168–215; Gentry and Wellum, 286–94) and through his vow to Abraham in 22:16–18 following the patriarch’s faith-filled, obedient

willingness to sacrifice Isaac (cf. 26:3–5). The Lord affirms that he will fulfill both stage one (great nation) and stage two (the world blessed) of his covenantal promises, but he also stresses that the enjoyment of fulfillment is contingent on obedience (see esp. 18:18–19).

In light of the inherent wickedness of humanity both before and after the flood (e.g., 6:5; 8:21), and because we know the old covenant will ultimately fail due to the people’s lack of faith and hardness of heart (Deut. 31:16–17, 27, 29; cf. 2 Kings 17:14), how can God justly justify the ungodly and fulfill what he promised to Abraham (see Exod. 34:7; Prov. 17:15)? From Genesis we know that Abraham’s “offspring” will only multiply and Yahweh’s blessing will only reach the nations in the days of the single, male “offspring” deliverer (Gen. 22:17b–18; cf. 17:4–6). Thus, God himself provides a faithful covenant Son who will perfectly obey on behalf of the many (Rom. 5:18–19; 8:3–4; cf. John 5:19; 8:29; 14:31; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8–9; 10:5–10). Operating in representative headship, this offspring’s active and perfect covenantal obedience secures forgiveness, righteousness, and the complete Abrahamic inheritance for all who are in him (Acts 10:43; Rom. 5:18–21; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:8, 14, 16, 29; Phil. 3:9; see Gentry and Wellum, 775–82).

How All God’s Promises Are Yes in Christ

Paul asserts, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Cor. 1:20), which in context suggests that through Jesus both OT and NT promises are for Christians (see 6:16–7:1). But how can believers today faithfully appropriate OT promises? (See esp. DeRouchie, “Yes”; cf. Starling.)

Four foundational principles. 1. **Christians benefit from OT promises only through Christ.** Paul is convinced that all who are in Christ inherit the OT’s blessings promised to Abraham: God made promises to Abraham and his offspring (Gen. 22:18; cf. 3:15). → Christ is the offspring (Gal. 3:16). → Faith unites us to Christ, making us offspring with him (3:7–9, 29). → We thus become heirs of the promised blessing (3:29; see Parker). At base, this is how *in Christ* alone all of God’s promises find their yes.

2. **All old-covenant curses become new-covenant curses.** As laid out in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:3), the era of the new covenant includes God’s promise to curse enemies. Thus, immediately after Moses predicts when Yahweh will circumcise the heart of his people and empower their love (Deut. 30:6), the prophet pronounces that God will also “put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you” (30:7). In the age of new-covenant heart circumcision (now realized in the church, Rom. 2:28–29; Phil. 3:3), God will take Deuteronomy’s curses, which warn old-covenant national Israel, and pour them out on all the enemies of his restored community.

The NT displays these curses as warnings against apostasy and against all who oppose God and his people

(see Matt. 25:31–46; Luke 6:20–26; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 10:26–27; cf. Heb. 10:29–30; 2 Pet. 2:1). Those in Christ will not experience curses in a punitive way, for Christ bears upon himself God’s curse against all believers (Gal. 3:13; cf. John 3:14–15; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). While we still experience God’s fatherly discipline, no level of earthly discipline or consequence calls into question the eternal security of any believer (Rom. 5:9). Instead, new-covenant curses serve as a means of grace to the elect to generate within them reverent fear of God leading to greater holiness (cf. Lev. 26:18, 21, 23, 27; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:11).

3. As part of the new covenant, Christians inherit the old covenant’s original and restoration blessings. In Leviticus and Deuteronomy, there are old-covenant conditional promises of blessing (Lev. 26:1–13; Deut. 28:1–14) and curse (Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 28:15–68). The condition is perfect obedience. There are also restoration blessings (Lev. 26:40–45; Deut. 30:1–14) that point in part to the era of the church age following the curse of exile. Paul declares, “Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Cor. 7:1). One of the promises to which the apostle refers combines an old-covenant original blessing (Lev. 26:11–12) and a restoration blessing (Ezek. 37:27): “What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’” (2 Cor. 6:16).

Because Israel does not fully obey what God instructed, the Mosaic covenant results in curse and condemnation, not blessing (2 Cor. 3:9). Nevertheless, Paul says that all those in Christ are enjoying the old covenant’s original and restoration blessings. When Christ perfectly obeyed the Father, he satisfied God’s demands for absolute loyalty and thus secured blessing for the elect he represents (cf. John 15:10; Rom. 5:18–19; 8:4; Eph. 1:3; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8).

Two conclusions follow from how Paul applies OT promises in 2 Cor. 6:16: (1) The restoration blessings of the old covenant include all the original blessings but in escalation and without the chance of loss. The way Ezekiel’s new-covenant promise reasserts the original old-covenant blessings from Lev. 26 supports this claim. (2) Through Christ, the original old-covenant blessings *and* the restoration blessings have direct bearing on Christians.

4. Through the Spirit, Christians already enjoy all the blessings of their inheritance but will enjoy them fully only at Christ’s final coming. Paul stresses that God the Father “has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing *in Christ*” and that he has sealed us with “the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession” (Eph. 1:3, 13–14).

Most scholars believe “spiritual blessings” refers to all the blessings that the Spirit of Christ secures for the saints, including those like election, adoption to sonship, redemption, forgiveness, sealing, and all that we will enjoy completely when we gain our full inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20, 22; 1 Pet. 1:3–4; see also the citation of Ps. 34:12–16 [LXX 33:13–17] in 1 Pet. 3:9–12).

In this overlap of the ages, our battle with sin is still evident, but God has freed believers so that sin no longer enslaves and condemns (Rom. 6:16–18; 7:25; 12:2). So, too, we still battle brokenness and decay, but such sufferings only develop our dependent faith in God and heighten our longing for the future (Rom. 8:20–23; 2 Cor. 4:16–18). And while death looms over us all, Christ removes its sting, and death itself becomes the channel to great reward (Phil. 1:21; cf. Rom. 5:17; 6:23; Rev. 21:4).

Guidelines for Christians in appropriating OT promises. God’s promises (old and new) are vital for Christians, and if we fail to appropriate OT promises, we will lose many of the life-giving words of truth that our trustworthy God has given us to nurture our hope. When Jesus “fulfills” the Law and Prophets, he is actualizing what Scripture anticipated and achieving what God promised and predicted (Matt. 5:17; cf. Matt. 11:13; Luke 16:16). But while every promise is indeed yes in Jesus, and while every blessing is now ours *in Christ*, the way Jesus fulfills the various OT promises and secures them as yes for us is not static. Thus, we must approach biblical promises through a salvation-historical framework that has Jesus at the center—as a lens that clarifies and focuses the lasting significance of all God’s promises (see figure 1).

1. Christ maintains some OT promises (no extension). That is, Christ *maintains* certain promises without adding any further beneficiaries to the original promise. Many of these are explicit restoration promises that include a vision of a global salvation after Israel’s exile. For example, Daniel envisions a resurrection of some to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2), and Jesus, alluding to this passage, sees the same and associates it with his second coming (John 5:28–29; cf. John 11:11, 25; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23). Daniel 12:2 gives Christians hope because “if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Rom. 6:5 ESV). This resurrection has an already/not-yet dimension, for the redeemed beneficiaries of the resurrection promise are saints of both the OT and NT epochs.

2. Christ maintains some OT promises (with extension). When Christ fulfills some promises, he extends the parties related to those promises. For example, Isaiah portrays the coming royal deliverer as speaking in the first person and declaring that Yahweh has called him from the womb, named him “Israel,” and told him that his mission as the individual person is to save some from Israel and the rest of the nations (Isa. 49:1, 3, 6), thus fulfilling God’s earlier promises to Abraham (Gen.

Old Testament Promises

Christ

New Covenant Fulfillment

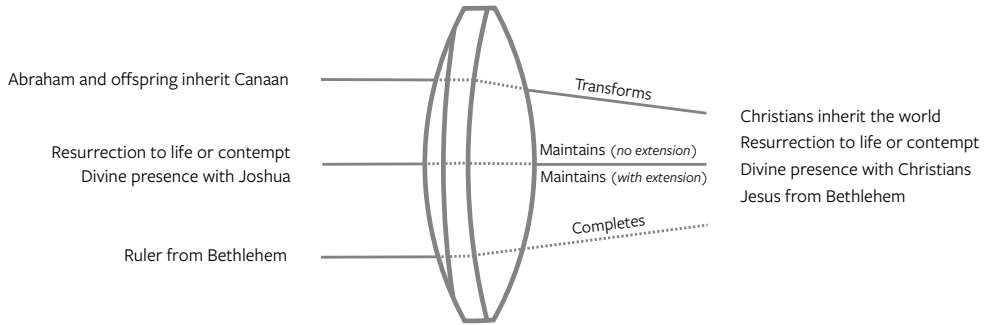


Figure 1. Old Testament Promises through the Lens of Christ

Source: Jason DeRouchie, “Is Every Promise ‘Yes?’” 35.

12:3; 22:18). Paul sees Jesus as the most immediate referent to which Isa. 49:6 points (Acts 26:23). But he also sees the OT promises reaching further, to the mission of all who are in Christ (13:47). A promise related to the work of the servant Christ has now become a commission for all the servants identified with him (cf. Isa. 52:7 with Rom. 10:15; Ps. 2:9 with Rev. 2:26–27; 12:5; 19:15).

3. Christ himself completes or uniquely fulfills some OT promises. Such fulfillments prove to believers that God will certainly keep the rest of his promises (Deut. 18:22; Ezek. 33:33; cf. Rom. 8:32). For example, the prophet Micah predicts that a long-prophesied ruler in Israel will rise from Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), and Christ exclusively fulfills that promise at his birth (Matt. 2:6). There is only one Christ, and he is born only once. Nevertheless, his birth is to spark a global return of “his brothers,” and as king he will “shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,” thus establishing lasting security and peace and enjoying a great name (Mic. 5:3–5). All these added promises continue to give Christians comfort and hope.

4. Christ transforms some OT promises. That is, he develops both the promise’s makeup and its audience. These promises relate most directly to shadows that clarify and point to a greater substance in Christ or to OT patterns or types that find their climax or antitype in Jesus. Yahweh’s promise to give the land to Abraham and his offspring as a lasting possession is of this kind (cf. Gen. 13:15; 17:8; 48:4; Exod. 32:13). The patriarch serves as the father of a single nation who would dwell in the land of Canaan (Gen. 17:8) and oversee an even broader geopolitical sphere (15:18). These realities are initially fulfilled in the period of the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 2:24; 6:8; Deut. 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 30:20; 34:4) and realized in the days of Solomon (1 Kings 4:20–21). Nevertheless, Genesis already foresees Abraham becoming the father of not just one nation but *nations* (Gen. 17:4–6) and anticipates his influence reaching beyond the land to *lands* (26:3–4). This will happen when the singular, royal offspring rises to possess the gate of his enemies and when

in him all the earth’s nations are blessed (22:17b–18; cf. Ps. 2:7). Paul cites the Genesis land promises (Gen. 13:15; 17:8; 24:7) when he identifies Christ as the offspring to whom the promises were made (Gal. 3:16). The apostle then declares that all in Christ, whether Jew or gentile, slave or free, male or female, “are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:28–29). Paul also stresses that the Christians’ inheritance is *not* the present Jerusalem associated with the Mosaic covenant but is instead the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:24–26), which both Isaiah and John identify with the new earth (Isa. 65:17–25; Rev. 21:1–22:5; cf. Heb. 12:22).

In the new covenant, Christ transforms the type into the antitype by fulfilling the original land promise in himself and by extending it to the whole world through his people (Rom. 4:13); at the consummation the new earth will fully realize the antitype (see further Martin). While Christ maintains (without extension) Genesis’s promises of the *antitypical* lands (plural), he does this by transforming the promises to Israel of the land (singular) as an “everlasting possession.” The nature of his fulfillment identifies that the land (singular) is but a type, which he transforms into the antitype just as God has already foretold to the patriarchs.

Summary

God’s promises are one of the central motifs that tie all of Scripture together. God’s promises are often associated with life or death and conditioned on whether his covenant partner obeys. Whereas the old Mosaic covenant is conditional and revocable (and thus temporary in light of Israel’s disobedience), the Abrahamic covenant is conditional and irrevocable, meaning that God will indeed realize all the promises but will do so only through an obedient Son. Representing Abraham and Israel, Jesus actively obeys and secures OT promises for all who are in him. At least four principles should guide Christians in appropriating OT promises: (1) Christians benefit from OT promises only through Christ. (2) All old-covenant curses become new-covenant curses.

(3) As part of the new covenant, Christians inherit the old covenant's original and restoration blessings. (4) Through the Spirit, Christians already enjoy all the blessings of their inheritance, but they do not possess them in their final fullness. Christ maintains some promises without extension, maintains others with extension, completes some, and transforms some.

See also Covenant; Land; Law; Literal Fulfillment; Mystery

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Prophet

When we encounter prophets on the pages of Scripture, we may associate them with pop-culture references such as Nostradamus's ridiculous predictions in the supermarket tabloid *Weekly World News* or *The Daily Prophet* newspaper in the Harry Potter novels. But prophecy in the Bible is of the utmost seriousness. It is God's primary means of communicating with his people and the source of Scripture itself. Prophets speak on behalf of God and with his full authority.

In the OT, the primary word to denote prophecy is the verb *nb'* ("to prophesy," 115x) and the related noun *nābî'* ("prophet," 317x). Other words include *hōzeh* (16x) and *rō'eh* (12x), both translated "seer" in most English translations. In the NT, the root *prophēt-* occurs a total of 195 times as a noun ("prophecy," "male prophet," "female prophet"), adjective ("prophetic"), and verb ("to prophesy"). In addition, the noun *pseudoprophētēs* ("false prophet") occurs 11 times. Although there are potentially many other references to prophetic activities and oracles in the Bible, we will restrict our discussion to texts containing these explicit terms.

Prophets in the OT

The essential role of a prophet is that of a spokesperson. In Exod. 4, Moses resists God's call to confront the Egyptian pharaoh over his enslavement of the Israelites. God responds that Aaron will be Moses's spokesman, "You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth. . . . He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him" (4:15–16). Later, God says, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet" (7:1). This use of the word "prophet" illustrates the definition of prophets who speak for God: "A prophet was chosen by God to receive his message and then to proclaim it to an audience in a particular historical situation" (Tully, 62).

Task. Moses puts forward the key elements of a prophetic "job description" in Deut. 18:15–22. First, Moses says, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you" (18:15). Because the word "prophet" is singular and because Moses was unique in that he spoke to the Lord face to face, this statement was often later understood as a prediction of a *particular* future prophet who would be like Moses (e.g., the prophetic office of the Messiah). However, the previous context in Deut. 17–18 introduces *institutions* that God was establishing for Israel, such as judgeship (17:8–13),