

**Father of a Multitude of Nations:
New Covenant Ecclesiology in Old Testament Perspective**

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Thesis: The NT’s application of “seed” language to both Jews and Gentiles in Christ fulfills OT hopes for the fulfillment of Abraham’s fatherhood of a multitude of nations through the messianic king and supports a progressive covenantal flavor of baptistic new covenant ecclesiology.

Paper Outline:

1. Jews and Gentiles as “the Seed of Abraham”
2. Abraham, Father of a Multitude of Nations
 - 2.1. Abraham’s Fatherhood—By Nature or Adoption?
 - 2.2. The Implications of Abraham’s Fatherhood
3. The Servant and His “Seed” in Isaiah
 - 3.1. The “Survivors of the Nations” as the “Seed” of Israel (Isa 45:25)
 - 3.2. The “Many” Becoming “Seed” through the Servant King’s Atoning Work (Isa 52:13–53:12)
 - 3.3. New Covenant “Seed” as the Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Isa 54:1–3)
 - 3.4. Conclusion
4. Synthesis and Fulfillment in Christ
 - 4.1. Abraham’s Fatherhood Realized Through Christ
 - 4.2. The Narrowing of the “Seed” and the Hope of the Promised “Offspring”
5. Implications for Theological Systems
 - 5.1. Progressive Covenantalism and Dispensational Theology
 - 5.2. Progressive Covenantalism and Covenant Theology

Key Texts

1. Genesis 12:1–3

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם 12:1		And Yahweh said to Abram,		
לֵךְ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלֶדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָה: וְאָנֹכִי לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֲבָרְכְךָ וְאֶגְדַּלְתִּיךָ שְׁמֶךָ	b 2 b c	“Go from your land and from your kindred and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you, 2 so that I may make you into a great nation, may bless you, and may make great your name.	I.	The Commission to Become a Supreme Kingdom (Gen 12:1–2c) A. The Command to Go to the Land (12:1b) B. The Promise of a Supreme Kingdom Motivating the Obedient Following (12:2a–c)
וְהָיָה בְרָכָה: וְאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אֲנִי וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כָּל מִשְׁפָּחֹת הָאָדָמָה:	d 3 b c	And (there) be a blessing, 3 so that I may bless those who bless you (but the who-ever declares you cursed I will curse) and so that all the families of the ground may be blessed in you.	II.	The Consequent Commission to Be an Agent of Blessing (12:2d–3) A. The Command to Be a Blessing (12:2d) B. The Promise of Serving as an Agent of Blessing to the World Motivating the Obedient Witness (12:3) 1. Yahweh’s blessing all who bless Abram but cursing the one who curses (12:3ab) 2. All families of the land being blessed by God in Abram (12:3c)

2. Genesis 17:3b–8

<p>17:3b וַיִּדְבֹר אֱלֹהִים לְאַמְרָא: 4 אֲנִי הִנֵּה בְרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב הַמִּזְוֹן גוֹיִם: 5 וְלֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת־שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שִׁמְךָ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אֲבֹהֶמוֹן גוֹיִם נִתְתִּיךָ: 6 וְהִפְרֵתִי אֶתְּךָ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד וְנִתְתִּיךָ לְגוֹיִם וּמְלָכִים מִמֶּנּוּ יֵצְאוּ: 7 וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ לְדֹרֹתֶם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְהָיוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים וְלִזְרַעְךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ: 8 וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ אֶת אֶרֶץ מִגְרֵיךָ אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאֶחְזַת עוֹלָם וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים:</p>	<p>ESV: 17:3b And God said to him, 4 “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”</p>
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3. Isaiah 53:10–54:3

<p>53:10 וַיְהִי כַּחַסְדֵּךָ וְכַפָּאֹ הַחֲלִי אֶסְתַּפֵּשׂ אֶשְׁמֵ נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה זָרַע יִאֲרִיךְ יָמָיו וְחַפְזָן יְהוָה בִּינְדוּ יִצְלַח: 11 מִמַּעַמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יִשְׁבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִיק צְדִיק עַבְדֵי לְרַבִּים וְעוֹנֵתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל: 12 לָכֵן אַחֲלַק־לוֹ בְּרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יַחְלַק שְׁלָל־תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲרָה לַמְּוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֲטָא־רַבִּים נָשָׂא וְלִפְשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ: ס 54:1 רְגִי עָקְרָה לֹא יִלְדָה פְצָחִי רְגָה וְצִהְלִי לֹא־חָלָה כִּי־רַבִּים בְּנֵי־שׁוֹמְמָה מִבְּנֵי בְעוּלָה אָמַר יְהוָה: 2 הֲרַחֲבִי מְקוֹם אֹהֶלְךָ וִירִיעוֹת מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִטוּ אֶל־תַּחֲשֻׁכֵי הָאָרֶץ מִיִּתְרֶיךָ וַיִּתְדַמְּדוּ חֲזָקִי: 3 כִּי־יִמִּין וּשְׂמֹאל תִּפְרָצִי זָרַעֲךָ גוֹיִם יִרְשׁוּ וְעָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת יוֹשִׁיבוּ:</p>	<p>ESV: 53:10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.</p> <p>54:1 “Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the LORD. 2 “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. 3 For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.</p>
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4. Isaiah 42:14–16

<p>42:14 הַחֲשִׁיתִי מֵעוֹלָם אַחֲרִישׁ אֶתְאַפֵּק כִּי־לִדְדָה אֶפְטָה אֶשֶׁם וְאֶשְׂאֵף יָחַד: 15 אַחֲרִיב הָרִים וּגְבְעוֹת וְכָל־עֵשְׂבָם אוֹבִישׁ וְשִׁמְתִי נְהָרוֹת לָאִיִּים וְאֶגְמִים אוֹבִישׁ: 16 וְהוֹלַכְתִּי עִוְרִים בְּדֶרֶךְ לֹא יָדְעוּ בְּנִתְיבוֹת לֹא־יָדְעוּ אֲדָרְכֶם אֲשִׁים מִחֹשֶׁךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם לְאוֹר וּמִקְעָשִׁים לְמִישׁוֹר אֲלֶה הַדְּבָרִים עֲשִׂיתָם וְלֹא עֲזַבְתִּים:</p>	<p>ESV: 42:14 For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. 15 I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. 16 And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.</p>
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A published version of this paper is forthcoming in Stephen J. Wellum and Brent A. Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Mediating Position Between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2015). An expanded version titled “The Nations and Abraham’s Seed: Some Old Testament Roots to New Covenant Ecclesiology” is forthcoming in *JETS* 58.3 (2015).