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**THE GOSPEL COALITION**

# Is *Every* Promise “Yes”? Old Testament Promises and the Christian<sup>1</sup>

— Jason S. DeRouchie —

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**Abstract:** Which biblical promises are for Christians? God’s promises play a vital role in helping believers grow in sanctification and suffer with hope, but should we claim all OT promises as our own, seeing as God gave them to a different people and under a different covenant? This article considers why and how every promise is “Yes” in Christ and seeks to empower believers to faithfully appropriate OT promises without abusing them. In the process it supplies five foundational principles that clarify the Christian’s relationship to OT promises, and then it gives three guidelines for hoping in OT promises through Christ.

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## *1. The Challenge and Need for Christians to Claim OT Promises*

**T**he promises of God—what we dread or hope for tomorrow changes who we are today.<sup>2</sup> This foundational Christian doctrine colors all of our lives as believers, both in times of temptation and trial. God’s promises motivate holiness and awaken expectation and confidence in our pursuit of the Lord. But which biblical promises are for us? Can Christians legitimately appropriate *all* Old Testament (OT) promises as our own, when God gave them to specific individuals or peoples in a different time and under a different covenant? In this study, I seek to answer this query, considering

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<sup>1</sup>The author originally drafted this article as a special address in celebration of his promotion to full professor of Old Testament and biblical theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary (23 February 2017). The content of the study is a substantial expansion of materials first published in Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 460–81. The author thanks Joel Dougherty and Ryan Eagy for their help on some of the visuals, and he thanks Don Straka for reading through two different drafts of this paper and offering helpful suggestions. The video, audio, and Power-Point of the presentation are available at [www.jasonderouchie.com](http://www.jasonderouchie.com) or <http://wp.me/p8hxJ9-Ql>.

<sup>2</sup>See John Piper, *Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2012).

why and how *every* promise in Scripture is “Yes” in Christ. In the process, I hope to help believers know better how to faithfully claim OT promises as our own.

### 1.1. The Importance of God’s Promises in the Believer’s Life

The apostle Peter declares, “[God] has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” (2 Pet 1:4; cf. Rom 4:18–21; 15:13).<sup>3</sup> Both Paul and John make similar statements. “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 John 3:2–3). Faith in God’s promises creates hope or dread, and what we anticipate tomorrow changes who we are today.

Stated differently, a fundamental way that we as Christians are to fight sin and to pursue holiness is by overcoming sinful desire by embracing higher, more beautiful desires. This is the primary thesis of Piper’s *Future Grace*. Sin makes deceitful promises that lure us away from God, and we battle the desires of the flesh by trusting God’s promises for a better tomorrow. We put our faith in the Lord’s promise of future grace, and in doing so we gain fresh power in our pursuit of godliness. God’s promises confront a whole host of sins.

If we are *anxious* about having enough, we turn from worry and heed Jesus’s call to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” confident that “all these things [food, clothing, shelter] will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). We engage in “prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,” trusting that God’s peace “will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6–7) and that “my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19). When *covetousness* rises in our soul, we nurture contentment and keep our lives free from the love of money by recalling promises like, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb 13:5). In our passion for sexual purity, we fight *lust* by remembering the promise, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt 5:8; cf. 5:29–30). Similarly, to overcome seeds of *bitterness*, we remember Jesus’s warning, “If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (6:15). Also, Paul motivates his charge to “repay no one evil for evil” and to “never avenge yourselves” by promising that God takes seriously all sins against his own people and will repay: “Leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’” (Rom 12:17, 19). We fight *fear of man* by heightening our fear of God, recalling how valuable we are to him and recognizing that the consequence of not living for his pleasure is far greater than anything man can do to us. “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt 10:28–31). Assurance that God is already 100% for us in Christ is fundamental to battling *fear of condemnation* and

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<sup>3</sup> When Peter speaks of God’s “promises,” he appears to be referring both to anticipated future *blessings* (e.g., 1 Pet 3:9, 14) and potential future *curses*. That the latter is included is clear when he asserts of the coming of future salvation of the righteous *and* punishment of the wicked, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

to pursuing holiness. The only sins that we can overcome are forgiven ones, for we must move ahead in the power of blood-bought grace. Those in Christ Jesus trust that “there is ... now no condemnation” (Rom 8:1), for “Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (8:34; cf. 8:32; John 10:27–30). Finally, to battle *fear of failure*, we believe promises like, “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6; cf. Jer 32:40; 1 Thess 5:23–24). Christians must recognize the importance of God’s promises for our pursuit of holiness.

But not only this, the psalmist declared, “This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life” (Ps 119:50). When we face suffering, God’s promises in Scripture supply one of the bulwarks of hope for Christians.<sup>4</sup> We trust that God *will* be faithful to his word and that in his good time he *will* act on behalf of his own.

When tears flow, we call to mind that, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.... The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:3, 6). When the darkness lingers, we believe that “the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning” (Lam 3:22–23). So we “sing praises to the LORD ... and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps 30:4–5 [34:5–6 MT]). When fear assaults, we remember God’s words, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isa 41:10). When worry grips the soul and we feel alone, YHWH’s pledge rings out: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (43:2–3). And finally, when death’s shadow draws near, our soul finds rest knowing, “The LORD is my shepherd ... [and] even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are with me” (Ps 23:1, 4).

## 1.2. Which Promises Are for Christians?

All these biblical texts are rich with divine promise, but all those related to hope amidst suffering are also from OT. Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 1:20 that “all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus].” But was he talking about the OT promises too—like those given to national Israel? Can we as Christians claim as our own the various promises God gave before the time of Jesus to specific individuals under different covenants? Should we have our kids sing these words?

*Every* promise in the Book is mine,  
*Every* chapter, every verse, and every line.  
*All* the blessings of his love, divine—  
*Every* promise in the Book is mine.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> I say “*one* of the bulwarks of hope,” because God’s character and disposition toward the broken also give us hope: “O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption” (Ps 130:7; cf. Exod 32:6–7; Deut 10:17–18).

<sup>5</sup> The Sensational Nightingales, “Every Promise in the Book Is Mine,” *Let Us Encourage You* (Malco Records, 2005, orig. 1957).

The “prosperity gospel” has quickly answered, “Yes,” claiming that, if Christians have enough faith, God will reward them today with all the spiritual *and* material prosperity detailed in the old covenant blessings.

And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD God, ... blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. (Deut 28:1, 3–6; cf. 30:16)

Are these blessings from Deuteronomy something that we in Christ can or even should claim as ours today, already, by faith?<sup>6</sup>

Health and wealth teachers rightly affirm that “those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (Gal 3:9) and that “though [our Lord Jesus Christ] was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). What is missed, however, is that Paul’s “blessing” in Galatians 3:9 is focused on our receiving “the promised *Spirit* through faith” (Gal 3:14) and that Abraham was among those who “died in faith, not having received the things promised” (Heb 11:13). Furthermore, because the “poverty” of Christ in 2 Corinthians 8:9 is focused not on an abject material lack but on his incarnation (Phil 2:6–8), our “riches” point not directly to material prosperity but to salvation and all its benefits (1 Cor 1:4–8). How much these “benefits” relate to health and wealth in this life is what this paper section seeks to address.

### 1.3. The NT’s Application of OT Promises to Christians

My macro-purpose in this discussion is not to critique health and wealth teaching but rather to equip Christians to think through the lasting significance of OT promises.<sup>7</sup> In responding to prosperity

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<sup>6</sup> By “prosperity gospel” I do *not* mean speaking and working to see people move from material, social, emotional, and spiritual poverty to prosperity, for such a desire is God-honoring and stands as a natural fruit of the gospel in one’s life (see Timothy Keller, “The Gospel and the Poor,” *Them* 33.3 [2008]: 8–22; cf. Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 7 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999]; Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor—and Yourself*, 2nd ed. [Chicago: Moody, 2012]; Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus, *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013]; Brian Fikkert and Russell Mask, *From Dependence to Dignity: How to Alleviate Poverty through Church-Centered Microfinance* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015]). Instead, what I mean by “prosperity gospel” is a type of teaching that replaces with worldliness the true good news that the reigning God saves and satisfies believing sinners by Christ Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. For more, see the next footnote.

<sup>7</sup> For two helpful, balanced, recent critiques of the prosperity gospel, see John Piper, “Introduction to the Third Edition,” in *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 15–32; Maura, Michael Otieno, Conrad Mbewe, Ken Mbugua, John Piper, and Wayne Grudem, *Prosperity? Seeking the True Gospel* (Nairobi: Africa Christian Textbooks Registered Trustees in partnership with The Gospel Coalition, 2015). As an initial response, I would say that a conscious or unconscious imbalanced belief in retribution theology—“what you sow you will reap in the here and now”—often bears devastating effects. The worldliness of prosperity theology is seen at least in the ways it (1) nurtures an entitlement mentality, (2) places undue guilt, (3) misrepresents God’s character, and (4) minimizes Christ’s saving work while exalting some at the expense of others. First, in my life and in the lives of many who are part of Western evangelical churches, prosperity gospel perspectives show up when we have wealth or health, expect to keep it, and get angry at God or at least very anxious when he takes it away. We feel entitled to a certain level of physical provision and protec-

teachers or in grasping for ourselves how OT promises relate to believers, it is not enough to say simply, “We are part of the new covenant, and therefore old covenant promises do not apply to the church,” for the NT apostles are very quick to cite OT promises and to apply lasting significance to them!

For example, consider Romans 12:19, where Paul charges: “Never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’” Here the apostle cites the promise from Deuteronomy 32:35, which YHWH asserts over all who would oppress his people: “Vengeance is mine. I will repay!” (cf. Heb 10:30). Paul says that as Christians we gain power to love our enemies in the present because we can rest assured that God will indeed judge rightly in the future. And we believe this because of an OT promise.

Similarly, Hebrews 13:5–6 declares: “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” Here the author cites one OT promise from Joshua 1:5 and one OT expression of confidence from Psalm 118:6. This NT author sees his OT Scriptures as lastingly relevant for the church. The psalmist proclaims Godward trust during a time of distress, and the author of Hebrews asserts that every believer can rest assured with the same truths. As for the promise, the author claims that we should not look to money for security *because* God has promised to always be with us! He cites the pledge YHWH gave to Joshua just before Israel’s conquest of Canaan: “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” (Josh 1:5). Somehow we can legitimately use this promise to help us battle giants like covetousness in our own lives—something that Achan in the days of Joshua should have done (see Josh 7:1, 20–21).

As Christians, we must have a framework for benefiting from God’s ancient promises like these, yet in a way that does not produce abuses. In the discussion that follows, I will offer five principles that should shape our thinking, all based on biblical texts, and then I will propose some biblical-theological guidelines for the Christian’s appropriation of OT promises.

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tion right now. Oh, that we with Paul would live out the truth, “In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:12–13). Second, another subtle version of “health and wealth” thinking occurs when parishioners carry unjustified guilt or burden because they believe that their hardship or ailment must be due to their own lack of spiritual fervor. While possible (e.g., 1 Cor 11:29–30), both the story of Job and Jesus’s own teaching stress that some brokenness has nothing to do with our sin or the sins of our parents (Job 2:3; John 9:2–3). Third, prosperity preaching becomes full grown when popular personalities in North America, South America, Africa, and parts of Asia become rich by promoting a shallow, paralyzing, unqualified health and wealth message. They promise material riches or bodily wholeness for the here and now, if one has enough faith. But in doing so, as with idolatry in the OT age, they misrepresent God’s character and commitments, treating him as one whom we can manipulate and viewing material blessing as a wage-earned (e.g., Hos 2:12; 9:1; Mic 1:7) (somewhat comparable to the Eastern religious principle of karma). In contrast, the Lord “is not partial and takes no bribe,” and he “executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing” (Deut 10:17–18). Fourth, health and wealth teaching often fails to address the true core of the gospel—that the reigning God saves and satisfies believing sinners by Christ Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. In failing to address sin and the need for a savior, they fail to clarify the only means of relief from eternal suffering. And in the end, the worldview repays little, except into the pockets of those who are not at all grieved over the ruin before them (Amos 6:6). God is not pleased with these destructive teachers, and to such as these he declared through Amos, “Prepare to meet your God!” (4:12). “Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light!” (5:18).

## 2. Five Foundational Principles

I have noted the challenge and necessity for Christians to claim OT promises. Now I want to overview five principles that govern my thinking regarding how OT promises relate to new covenant believers.

### 2.1. Christians Benefit from OT Promises Only through Christ

Our first passage is from Galatians 3, wherein Paul confronts claims that for Gentiles to become full inheritors of God’s OT promises, they needed to submit to circumcision and, with that, the Mosaic law. In contrast, the apostle asserts that, while the old covenant law served as a “guardian until Christ came..., now that [the age of] faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian” (Gal 3:24–25). Furthermore, he claims that only identifying with Christ Jesus by faith secures inheritance rights for Jew and Greek alike. All must receive “adoption as sons” (4:5).

In his argument, Paul fluctuates freely between the singular “promise” of inheritance that includes God’s Spirit (3:14, 17–19, 22, 29; cf. 3:8) and the plural “promises” of offspring, land, and international blessing that God gave to Abraham and his offspring (3:16, 21). With texts like Genesis 12:3 and 22:18 in mind, he writes, “Know then that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham. And Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all nations be blessed.’ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith” (3:7–9)—a blessing that he then says comes to us through Christ Jesus (3:14).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, apparently with the land promises in Genesis 13:15 and 17:8 in mind, he says, “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ” (3:16). Paul recognizes that Genesis places the hope of the world not on a corporate Israel but on a representative, single, male, royal messianic deliverer. “And your offspring shall possess the gate of *his* enemies, and *in your offspring* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:17b–18). And now that this offspring has come, “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (3:29; cf. Rom 15:8–9). For Paul, only in Christ can anyone inherit the OT’s promised blessings.<sup>9</sup> This is what Paul means when he declares that in Christ alone all of God’s promises find their “Yes” (2 Cor 1:21).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis speaks of God’s blessing reaching all “the *nations* of the earth” through Abraham (Gen 18:18), his offspring (22:18), and through Isaac’s offspring (26:4). It speaks of the blessing reaching all “the *families* of the ground” through Abraham (12:3) and through Jacob and his offspring (28:14).

<sup>9</sup> For a helpful synthesis of promise, offspring, and inheritance in Galatians 3, see David Starling, “The Yes to All God’s Promises: Jesus, Israel and the Promises of God in Paul’s Letters,” *RTR* 71 (2012): 187–89. For my reflections on Paul’s use of Genesis in Galatians 3:16, see Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 36–49. See also Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* Structure of Genesis,” *JETS* 56 (2013): 226–29; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective,” *JETS* 58 (2015): 445–85.

<sup>10</sup> For a helpful overview of Paul’s promise theology, see Starling, “The Yes to All God’s Promises.”

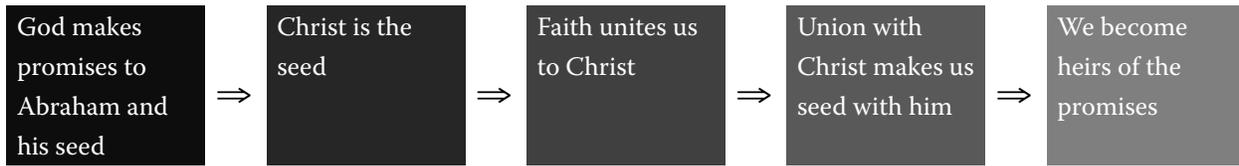


Figure 1. OT Promises Reach Believers Only through Christ.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2. All Old Covenant Curses Become New Covenant Curses

The next passage comes from Deuteronomy 30:6–7: “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you.” Notice here that in the age of new covenant heart circumcision (already being realized in the church, Rom 2:28–29), God will take the curses of Deuteronomy—the very curses that served as warnings to old covenant national Israel (see fig. 2), and he will pour them out on the enemies of the restored community of God. What this suggests is that the old covenant curses become new covenant curses, which the Lord brings not on the members of the new covenant but on their enemies. As in the Abrahamic covenant, where YHWH promised to curse anyone who dishonored the patriarch and those he represented—“him who dishonors you I will curse” (Gen 12:3), so too the Lord will confront those who spurn his new covenant community. We see this reaffirmed in both Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30, which recall Deuteronomy 32:35–36: “Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.’ For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.” Note that in all these passages *God* is the one who bears the responsibility to curse, not us. Our responsibility is to rest, trusting that he will work justice in the best time and in the best way. At times, initial expressions of his wrath will come through the political state (Rom 2:4; cf. 1 Thess 4:6) or through death (Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23), but the ultimate manifestation will come at Christ’s second appearing (2 Thess 1:8–9; cf. Isa 66:15).

Blessings	
1. YHWH’s presence / favor / loyalty (Lev 26:11–12)	6. General and unspecified (Deut 28:2, 6, 8, 12–13)
2. Confirmation of the covenant (Lev 26:9)	7. Peace and security in the land with no fear:
3. Be a holy people to YHWH (Deut 28:9)	a. General (Lev 26:5–6);
4. Rains in season (Lev 26:4; Deut 28:12)	b. From harmful animals (Lev 26:6);
5. Abounding prosperity and productivity:	c. From enemies (Lev 26:6)
a. General (Deut 28:12);	8. Victory over enemies (Lev 26:7–8; Deut 28:7)
b. Fruit of the womb (Lev 26:9; Deut 28:4, 11);	9. Freedom from slavery (Lev 26:13)
c. Fruit of the livestock (Deut 28:4, 11);	10. Global influence and witness (Deut 28:1, 10, 12)
d. Fruit of the ground (Lev 26:4–5, 10; Deut 28:4, 8, 11)	

<sup>11</sup> For this framework, see John Piper, “Isaiah 41:10: Are the Old Testament Promises Made to Us?,” <http://www.desiringgod.org/labs/are-the-old-testament-promises-made-to-us>; see also John Piper, “Which Old-Testament Promises Apply to Me?,” <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/which-old-testament-promises-apply-to-me>.

## Is Every Promise “Yes”?

<b>Curses</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anger and rejection from YHWH (Lev 26:17, 24, 28, 41; Deut 4:24–25; 29:20, 24, 27–28; 31:17–18, 29; 32:16, 19–22, 30)</li> <li>2. Rejection and destruction of the cult (Lev 26:31)</li> <li>3. War and its ravages:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. General (Lev 26:17, 25, 33, 37; 28:25, 49, 52; 32:23–24, 30, 41–42);</li> <li>b. Siege (Lev 26:25–26, 29; Deut 28:52–53, 55, 57)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Fear, terror, and horror (Lev 26:16–17, 36–37; Deut 28:66–67; 32:25)</li> <li>5. Occupation and oppression by enemies and aliens (Lev 26:16–17, 32; Deut 28:31,33, 43–44, 48, 68; 32:21)</li> <li>6. Agricultural disaster and non-productivity:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. General (Lev 26:20; Deut 28:17–18, 22, 40; 29:23);</li> <li>b. Drought (Lev 26:19; Deut 28:22–24);</li> <li>c. Crop pests (Deut 28:38–42)</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. Starvation / famine (Lev 26:26, 29, 45; Deut 28:53–56; 32:24)</li> <li>8. Illness, pestilence, and contamination (Lev 26:16; Deut 28:21–22, 27–28, 35, 59–61; 29:22; 32:24, 39)</li> <li>9. Desolation:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Of holy places (Lev 26:31);</li> <li>b. Of cities and towns (Lev 26:31, 33);</li> <li>c. Of the land (Lev 26:32–35, 43; Deut 28:51; 29:23)</li> </ol> </li> <li>10. Destruction by fire (Deut 28:24; 32:22)</li> <li>11. Harm from wild animals (Lev 26:22; Deut 32:24)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Decimation and infertility:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Of family (Lev 26:22; Deut 28:18, 59);</li> <li>b. Of cattle (Lev 26:22; Deut 28:18, 51);</li> <li>c. Of population generally (Lev 26:22, 36; Deut 4:27; 28:62; 32:36)</li> </ol> </li> <li>13. Exile and captivity:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Of the people (Lev 26:33–34, 36, 38–39, 41, 44; Deut 4:27; 28:36–37, 41, 63–64, 68; 29:28; 30:4; 32:26);</li> <li>b. Of the king (Deut 28:36)</li> </ol> </li> <li>14. Forced idolatry in exile (Deut 4:28; 28:36, 64)</li> <li>15. Futility (Lev 26:16, 20; Deut 28:20, 29–31, 33, 38–41)</li> <li>16. Dishonor and degradation (Lev 26:19; Deut 28:20, 25, 37, 43–44, 68)</li> <li>17. Loss of possessions and impoverishment (Deut 28:31)</li> <li>18. Loss of family (Deut 28:30, 32, 41; 32:25)</li> <li>19. Helplessness and stumbling (Lev 26:36–37; Deut 28:29, 32; 32:35–36; 38–39)</li> <li>20. Psychological afflictions (Deut 28:20, 28, 34, 65–67)</li> <li>21. Lack of peace and rest (Deut 28:65)</li> <li>22. Denial of burial (Deut 28:26)</li> <li>23. Becoming like the cities of the plain (Deut 29:23)</li> <li>24. Death and destruction (Lev 26:36, 39; Deut 4:26; 28:20–22, 44, 48, 51, 61; 29:20; 30:15,18–19; 31:17; 32:25–26, 35, 39, 42)</li> <li>25. General and unspecified (Deut 4:30; 28:20, 24, 45, 59, 61, 63; 29:19, 21–22; 31:17, 21, 29; 32:23, 35)</li> <li>26. General punishment, curse, and vengeance (Lev 26:41, 43; Deut 28:16, 20–21, 27; 30:19; 32:35, 41, 43)</li> <li>27. Multiple punishments (Lev 26:18, 21, 24, 28)</li> </ol>
<b>Restoration Blessings</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Renewal of YHWH’s presence, favor, and loyalty (Lev 26:42, 45; Deut 4:29, 31; 30:3, 9)</li> <li>2. Renewal of the covenant (Lev 26:42, 44–45; Deut 4:31)</li> <li>3. Restoration of true worship and ability to be faithful (Deut 4:30; 30:6, 8)</li> <li>4. Population increase (Deut 30:5, 9)</li> <li>5. Agricultural bounty (Lev 26:42; Deut 30:9)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Restoration of general prosperity, well-being, and wealth (Deut 30:3, 5, 9; 32:39)</li> <li>7. Return from exile and repossession of the land (Deut 30:3–5)</li> <li>8. Reunification (Deut 30:3–4)</li> <li>9. Power over enemies and aliens (Deut 30:7)</li> <li>10. Freedom and restoration from death and destruction (Lev 26:44; Deut 30:6; 32:39)</li> </ol>

Figure 2. Mosaic Covenant Blessings, Curses, and Restoration Blessings<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3. As Part of the New Covenant, Christians Inherit the Old Covenant's Original and Restoration Blessings

Moses originally motivated those in the old covenant to loyalty by distinguishing blessings that would come for obedience (Lev 26:3–13; Deut 28:1–14) and curses that would result from disobedience (Lev 26:14–39; Deut 28:15–68). Being certain that Israel's stubbornness would produce their destruction (e.g., Deut 4:25–28; 31:16–18, 27–29), the prophet also looked beyond curse to restoration blessings, fulfilled in the period we now know of as the new covenant (Lev 26:40–45; Deut 4:29–31; 30:1–14; cf. Jer 31:31–34).

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul declared, “Since *we have these promises*, beloved [Corinthian Christians], let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (7:1). Like Peter (2 Pet 1:4), Paul too saw God's promises as central to our pursuit of God-likeness. What is significant is that the promises to which Paul refers are all from the OT.<sup>13</sup> At the end of chapter 6, Paul uses a string of OT texts to urge Christians to “not be unequally yoked with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14). The first of these citations is in 6:16, where the apostle writes, “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’” As we will see, Paul here cites both an original old covenant blessing (Lev 26:11–12) and a restoration blessing (Ezek 37:27). Figure 3 supplies a comparison of the texts.

We begin with the restoration blessing in Ezekiel 37:27. The chapter opens with the vision of the valley of dry bones. Far from doing the law resulting in life (Ezek 20:11, 13, 21; cf. Lev 18:5), the nation of Israel had disobeyed YHWH, resulting in their ruin.<sup>14</sup> Their exile was equivalent to their death, and any future would demand a rebirth and new creation. This God promises to bring to them, joining the bones, adding flesh, and then placing his Spirit within them so they might live as if they were his temple (Ezek 37:1–14). And as in earlier days when the nations would come to see God's greatness at his temple (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:41–43; 10:1), now the nations would see the people and be pointed to the majesty of YHWH (Ezek 36:23; 37:28; cf. 36:27). Into this context, the Lord declares, “My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (37:27).

Paul's choice of the Greek ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς (“I will dwell among them”) in contrast to the LXX's καὶ ἔσται ἡ κατασκήνωσίς μου ἐν αὐτοῖς (“and my dwelling will be among them”) suggests that he is either quoting from memory or supplying his own rendering directly from the Hebrew **וְנִתְתִּי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם** (“I will place my dwelling in your midst”). Regardless, the second half of the promise parallels closely the Greek translation. What is missing in Ezekiel, however, is any mention of God's “walking” among

<sup>12</sup> All references are from Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 4; 28–32. No single prophetic book, except perhaps Isaiah, mentions all categories. The lists of “Curses” and “Restoration Blessings” are adapted from Douglas Stuart, “Malachi,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. by Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1259–60.

<sup>13</sup> In 2 Corinthians 6:16–7:1, Paul's citation of lastingly relevant OT promises includes reference to one original Mosaic covenant blessing (Lev 26:11–12 in 2 Cor 6:16) and a series of restoration blessings associated with the Davidic everlasting/new covenant (Ezek 37:27 in 2 Cor 6:16; Isa 52:11 and Ezek 20:34 in 2 Cor 6:17; 2 Sam 7:14 and Isa 43:6 in 2 Cor 6:18). For further reflections on these texts, see Starling, “The Yes to All God's Promises,” 191–93.

<sup>14</sup> For a development of this contrast, see Preston M. Sprinkle, “Law and Life: Leviticus 18:5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel,” *JOT* 31 (2007): 275–93.

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2 Corinthians 6:16	Leviticus 26:11–12	Ezekiel 37:27
NA <sup>28</sup>	Ralphs LXX/NETS	Ralphs LXX/NETS
τίς δὲ συγκατάθεσις ναῶ θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλων; ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἔσμεν ζῶντος, καθὼς εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι <u>ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν θεὸς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μου λαός.</u>	Ἐὰν τοῖς προστάγμασίν μου πορεύησθε καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς μου φυλάσσησθε καὶ ποιήσητε αὐτάς, ... <sup>11</sup> καὶ θήσω τὴν διαθήκην μου ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ βδελύξεται ἡ ψυχὴ μου ὑμᾶς. <sup>12</sup> <u>καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῶν θεός, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθέ μου λαός.</u>	καὶ ἔσται ἡ κατασκήνωσίς μου <u>ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς θεός, καὶ αὐτοὶ μου ἔσονται λαός.</u>
What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.	If you walk by my ordinances and observe my commandments and do them, ... <sup>11</sup> And I will place my tent [lit., “covenant”] among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. <sup>12</sup> And I will walk about among you and will be your God, and you shall be for me a nation.	And my encamping shall be among them, and I will be a god for them, and they shall be my people.
	MT/ESV	MT/ESV
	אִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם: <sup>11</sup> וְנָתַתִּי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא-תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם: <sup>12</sup> וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִיְיָתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי לְעָם:	וְהָיָה מִשְׁכְּנִי עֲלֵיהֶם וְהִיְיָתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָיָה יְהוָה לִי לְעָם:
	If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ... <sup>11</sup> I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. <sup>12</sup> And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.	My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Figure 3. Paul's Use of the OT in 2 Corinthians 6:16

his people, and this suggests that along with Ezekiel 37:27 Paul also has in mind the original Mosaic covenant blessing in Leviticus 26:11–12.<sup>15</sup>

The Mosaic law conditioned the enjoyment of its original blessings on perfect obedience. YHWH declared, “If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ... I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God,

<sup>15</sup> For a similar view that Paul is conflating both Leviticus 26:11–12 and Ezekiel 37:27, see Peter Balla, “2 Corinthians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 772.

and you shall be my people” (Lev 26:3, 11–12). Paul’s inclusion of the phrase *καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω* (“and I will walk”) directly matches the promises in Leviticus 26:12, suggesting that the apostle had *both* Moses and Ezekiel’s words in mind.

Significantly, because Israel did not fully obey God’s instructions, the Mosaic covenant resulted in curse and condemnation, not blessing (2 Cor 3:9). Nevertheless, Paul says that all those in Christ are enjoying the inaugurated fulfillment of both the original and restoration blessings.<sup>16</sup> Most likely, the apostle is seeing Christ’s perfect obedience to be wholly meeting for his elect the required loyalty needed to enjoy God’s blessing (cf. John 15:10; Rom 5:18–19; 8:4; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8). The reason that we as the church are delighting in the presence of God today is because of what Jesus has done on our behalf and not because we have kept the law perfectly. In Paul’s words elsewhere, the inheritance “depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law [namely, Christ] but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Rom 4:16).<sup>17</sup>

I draw two important observations from Paul’s application of OT promises in 2 Corinthians 6:16: (1) The restoration blessings of the old covenant include all the original blessings but in escalation and with never the chance of loss. This fact is suggested in the way that Ezekiel’s new covenant promise reasserts the original old covenant blessings from Leviticus 26. (2) The original old covenant blessings *and* the restoration blessings have direct bearing on Christians. Paul appears to draw together both texts, suggesting not only their close tie in the OT but also that, along with the new covenant restoration blessings, the original old covenant blessings do indeed relate to believers.<sup>18</sup>

#### **2.4. Through the Spirit, Some Blessings of the Christian’s Inheritance Are Already Enjoyed, Whereas Others Are Not Yet**

Paul highlighted in Ephesians 1:3, 13–14:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.... In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

*In Christ* believers enjoy “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” Most scholars believe this expression refers to the blessings “pertaining to or belonging to the Spirit”—that is, all the blessings that the Spirit of Christ secures for the saints, whether those *already* enjoyed like election, adoption to sonship, redemption, forgiveness, and sealing or those *not yet* enjoyed like the full inheritance (Eph

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<sup>16</sup> Balla writes, “Since all of these OT references [in 2 Cor 6:16–18] are direct verbal prophecies or are set in a direct verbal prophetic context, Paul sees them having inaugurated fulfillment in the Corinthian community. Consequently, the Corinthians are the beginning of the prophesied end-time tabernacle or temple, and they are part of the dawning fulfillment of Israel’s restoration prophecies” (Ibid., 773).

<sup>17</sup> For a development of this latter text, see Starling, “The Yes to All God’s Promises,” 193–95.

<sup>18</sup> Starling writes, “Paul indicates by the way in which he merges the citations together [in 2 Cor 6:16–18] that the Sinaitic and Davidic covenant formulas are applied to his readers not directly but second-hand, refracted through the lens of the end-of-exile prophecies of Ezekiel and Isaiah” (Ibid., 192.).

4:4–14).<sup>19</sup> All of these blessings fulfill the OT’s eschatological hopes associated with the promises of new covenant restoration (e.g., Deut 30:6; Isa 53:11; Jer 31:33–34; 32:40; Ezek 36:27; Dan 9:24). Therefore, while *all* God’s promises find their “Yes” in Christ (2 Cor 1:20), we enjoy some *already*, while others remain for the future. “[He] has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (1:22).

Another text that teaches the same thing is 1 Peter 3:9–12, wherein Peter asserts that the divine favor in Psalm 34:12–16 (LXX 33:13–17) is lastingly relevant for the church:

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Psalm 34 holds out a vision of eschatological blessing for the righteous ones (plural) who pursue good and not evil, and Peter here claims that this hope still exists for believers today.<sup>20</sup> The retribution-principle that stands behind the psalm appears to build on the covenantal blessing-curse structure of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, yet it colors these promises in eschatological hues. This future-orientation is clear in the fact that the psalmist knew that in the present many afflictions would come to God’s followers, and yet he was confident that “the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles” (Ps 34:17 [34:18 MT]) and that those who serve YHWH and take refuge in him would not be condemned (34:22 [34:23 MT]). In contrast, God will condemn those who hate the righteous one (singular), which I believe is shorthand for the messianic king (34:21 [34:22 MT]; cf. 2:12). Peter too clearly recognized that obedient Christians suffer (1 Pet 2:19–23; 3:14, 17; 4:12–19), and he too remained certain that in time God would “restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (5:10).<sup>21</sup>

At one level, the “blessing” that is sought in 1 Peter 3:9 appears to be something that God-followers can enjoy already in light of its connection to the “living hope” into which saints are already born (1:3; cf. 1:22–24; 5:1). We see the present-nature of “blessing” in 4:14, when the apostle stresses, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, *you are blessed*, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

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<sup>19</sup> E.g., Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 19; Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 666–67; Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 46; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 95. F. F. Bruce distinguishes the “spiritual blessings” from “material,” but I do not see this as justified in light of the reference in 1:14 to our full inheritance, which will include a transformed material creation. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 253.

<sup>20</sup> Karen Jobes supplies the following list of allusions to Psalm 34 (LXX 33) in the first half of Peter’s letter: 1 Pet 1:3 (Ps 33:2 LXX [34:1 ET]); 1:6 (Ps 33:20 LXX [34:19 ET]); 1:17 (Ps 33:5, 8 LXX [34:5, 7 ET]); 1:18; 2:16 (Ps 33:6 LXX [34:5 ET]); 2:17 (Ps 33:10, 12 LXX [34:9, 11 ET]); 3:12 (Ps 33:18 LXX [34:11 ET]). Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 221–22. In 1 Peter 3:10–12 the apostle follows the LXX in an adaptive fashion, writing in third person rather than second. See D. A. Carson, “2 Peter,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1037.

<sup>21</sup> See John Piper, “Hope as the Motivation for Love: 1 Peter 3:9–12,” *NTS* 26 (1980): 212–31.

From this perspective, Peter stresses that we experience numerous present expressions of divine favor as we pursue right conduct by faith and in God's power (1:5).<sup>22</sup>

At a greater level, however, most of the "blessing" for which we seek appears to remain not yet, for it relates to the future "inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1:4). It relates to the hope that our faith may result "in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:7) and to "the unfading crown of glory" that we long to receive (5:4). We see this future-orientation in 3:14, which reads, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you will be blessed.*"

From Peter's perspective, the pursuit of "blessing" is in no way a works-righteousness, for Christ's work on the cross purchased not only our justification but also our sanctification. By God's "great mercy, *he has caused* us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3). We "*by God's power* are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1:5). We serve "*by the strength that God supplies*—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (4:11). Our faithful pursuit of blessing today, therefore, is a fruit that points to the Lord's work in our lives.

### 2.5. All True Christians Will Persevere and Thus Receive Their Full Inheritance

My last text serves as a launching point for a broader discovery I have made in the book of Hebrews that addresses the role of Christian obedience for receiving what God has promised. The author reasons that every person—represented by the imagery of old covenant land—"that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned" (Heb 6:7–8).<sup>23</sup> He then asserts, however, "Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do" (6:9–10). He then charges, "We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full

<sup>22</sup> Wayne Grudem finds no less than ten "blessings" in this life that Peter stressed result from a Christian's right conduct: (1) loving Christ leads to utterable joy (1:8); (2) continuing faith leads to more benefits of salvation (1:9); (3) holy life with fear leads to avoiding God's fatherly discipline (1:17); (4) partaking of spiritual milk leads to growing up toward salvation (2:2); (5) trusting God and obeying leads to God's approval (2:19–20); (6) submitting to husbands leads to husbands won for Christ (3:1–2); (7) living considerately with one's wife leads to a husband's prayers not hindered (3:7); (8) enduring reproach for the name of Christ leads to a spirit of glory and of God resting on you (4:14); (9) casting one's cares on God leads to his caring for one's needs (5:7); (10) resisting the devil leads to God's restoring, confirming, strengthening, and establishing you (5:9–10). Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 157. To these I would add that humility before God leads to enjoyment of his grace (5:5). Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 230.

<sup>23</sup> George Guthrie notes how the harsh warning of Hebrews 6:7–8 falls "squarely in the context of Deuteronomy's "blessing and curse framework," echoing several elements from Deuteronomy: (1) the blessing of the land drinking rain (Deut 11:11; cf. Heb 6:7); (2) the blessed over against the cursed land (Deut 28:12; 29:18, 23–27; cf. Heb 12:15); (3) the burning of the land as an image of God's punishment (Deut 4:24; 9:3; 29:20; 32:22; cf. Heb 12:29); the nearness of God's judgment (Deut 32:35; cf. Heb 6:8; 10:30). He adds that the "thorns and thistles" from Hebrews 6:8 come from the curse text in Genesis 3:18, from which springs the imagery in Deuteronomy. George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 962–64.

assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (6:11–12).

By using the conjunction “for” (γάρ) and referring to the time “when God made a promise to Abraham,” 6:13 identifies that the promises to which the author refers in verse 12 include those in the OT. The only ones who will inherit these promises are those who persevere until the end, maintaining a believing heart and not falling away by giving into sin’s deceitfulness (3:12–13). These alone are truly part of the new covenant, for it is these who truly share in the work of the new covenant mediator: “For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end” (3:14; cf. 8:6–7, 13; 9:15).

Like other NT teachers (e.g., Matt 5:8; 2 Cor 7:1; Rev 21:27), the author of Hebrews emphasizes that “without [holiness] no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Persevering loyalty is a necessary condition to enjoy the future inheritance, for future judgment will be in accord with (though not on the basis of) deeds we do in this life (Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 1:17; Rev 2:23; 20:12). Thus Paul can urge Timothy, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16). And elsewhere he can stress, “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom 8:13; cf. 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–22; Eph 5:5).

But Paul makes clear that this new covenant call to persevere in faith is *not like* the old covenant’s call to obey in order to live: “If a person does [my statutes and rules], he shall live by them: I am the LORD” (Lev 18:5; cf. Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12). Speaking predominantly to the unregenerate, the old covenant charged Israel to pursue righteousness (Deut 16:20), and it declared that they would only be counted righteous and secure life *if* they met *all* the covenant’s demands (6:25; 8:1; cf. 4:1). Yet for Paul, “the very commandment that promised life proved to be death” (Rom 7:10). “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (7:12). Yet the majority in “Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law ... because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (9:31–32). Paul can thus declare that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4), because by Christ’s perfect obedience in life and death God frees believers from sin’s condemning power (Rom 5:18–19; 8:1; Col. 2:14), declares us righteous and reconciled (Rom 5:9–10; 2 Cor 5:21), and enables us to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4, 17, 22). That is, in the new covenant, righteousness and life becomes the foundation and not just the goal.

From the perspective of Hebrews, Christ’s priestly work as new covenant mediator provides an unprecedented “sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Heb 6:19) and “a better hope” than that of the old covenant (7:19). This is so for at least two reasons. First, unlike the sinful old covenant priests who themselves died, the high priest Jesus “always lives to make intercession” for those he saves (7:24), which means that we can “with confidence draw near to the throne of grace” expecting to “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (4:16). The one with all authority in heaven and on earth is working for his own! Furthermore, by his death he not only “redeems [all his saints] from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (9:15) but also “has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (10:14). Those in the new covenant *start* from the basis of being completely forgiven for all time (10:17–18), and this new foundation places our pursuit of holiness on a completely different footing than that of the old covenant. With this, God now writes his laws on our minds (10:16), moving us to follow his ways. Stated another way, because through Christ’s single sacrifice “we have been sanctified”

(10:10) “with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (10:22), we can now “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (10:23), knowing that God is *already* 100% for us in Jesus (13:5) and that “he who promised is faithful” (10:23). We have already “come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22), and he will “equip [us] with everything good that [we] may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” (13:21).

All sins that true saints seek to conquer are ones that God has already forgiven in Christ. We will receive our future inheritance on the basis of Christ’s new covenant sacrifice alone. We must persevere and enjoy “the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (12:14). However, by means of our past pardon, Christ’s present intercession, and the promises of future reward for the faithful and future punishment for those who fall away, God generates persevering faith, hope, and love and thus makes certain the endurance of all members of the new covenant.

### ***3. Guidelines for the Christian’s Appropriation of OT Promises***

God’s promises (old and new) are vital for Christians, and if we fail to appropriate OT promises, we will lose three-fourths of the life-giving words of truth that our trustworthy God has given us to nurture our hope. With this in mind, I want to offer some guidelines for the Christian’s application of OT promises.

#### **3.1. Celebrate That in Christ, All God’s Promises (Old and New) Are Already “Yes”—Both Blessings and Curses**

Paul stressed that “all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus Christ]” (2 Cor 1:20). This would include all the blessings, curses, and restoration blessings in the Old Testament.

With respect to *blessings*, Paul notes that “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham [has] come to the Gentiles” (Gal 3:14). Furthermore, all the old covenant blessings and restoration blessings from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 and 30 are the new covenant blessings that are *already* “Yes” in Christ (for a full list, see fig. 2). As Paul says, God already “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3; cf. 2 Cor 1:22).

As for *curses*, those in Christ will not experience curse in a punitive way, for Christ bears upon himself God’s curse against all believers. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal 3:13; cf. John 3:14–15; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 Pet 2:24). Christians can still experience God’s immediate “wrath” through human authorities (Rom 13:4), forms of his “judgment” (1 Cor 11:29–32), and the Lord’s fatherly “discipline” (Heb 12:7–11; Rev 3:19). All of these carry out the revealed purpose of biblical curses—to move people to repentance and to grow them in holiness (Lev 26:18, 21, 23, 27). Nevertheless, “Since ... we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the [ultimate] wrath of God” (Rom 5:9; cf. John 3:36). No level of earthly discipline or consequence calls into question the eternal security of any believer.

Old covenant curses become the new covenants curses (Deut 30:7) and are visible within the NT as warnings of punishment against apostasy and against all who stand at odds with God and his people. For example, new covenant curses are evident in (1) Jesus’s parable of the “sheep and goats” (Matt 25:31–46), (2) Jesus’s “blessings and woes” in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–26), and (3) the numerous warning passages that dot the NT, especially in Paul’s letters, Hebrews, and Revelation. For example,

Paul said, “If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim 2:12). Finally, Hebrews emphasizes that “if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries” (Heb 10:26–27).<sup>24</sup>

Within the new covenant, the old covenant curses are renewed for two reasons. First, they serve as a means of grace to the elect in order to generate within them reverent fear of God leading to greater holiness. Every sinner deserves death, and any experience of divine forbearance or even lesser punishment is designed to lead us to repentance (Lev 26:18, 21, 23, 27; Rom 2:4). When God disciplined in the old covenant, it was met by hardness rather than repentance (e.g., Amos 4:6–11), so YHWH declared, “Prepare to meet your God” (4:12). The new covenant Scriptures are loaded with warnings, and failure to trust and obey would God’s revelation would result in curse. Nevertheless, the author of Hebrews could declare of his audience, “We feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation” (Heb 6:9). Indeed, whereas in the old covenant the majority never heeded God’s word, all true new covenant members will heed God’s warnings (not perfectly, but truly, in Christ), thus identifying their true connection with the new covenant mediator. “For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end” (Heb 3:14; cf. 6:11–12 with 8:6–7, 13; 9:15).<sup>25</sup>

Second, old covenant curses are renewed in the new covenant in order to declare lasting punishment on all apostates and those who stand against the Lord and his people (cf. Gen 12:3; Deut 30:7). This role is very clear in the warning passages of Hebrews, where the author cites the new covenant curse text in Deuteronomy 32:35 and declares punishment on apostates who for a while looked as though they were a part of the new covenant but then turned on God: “How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay’” (Heb 10:29–30; cf. 2 Pet 2:1).

### **3.2. Affirm That While All the Bible’s Promises (Old and New) Are Already “Yes” in Christ, They Are *Not Yet* All Fully Realized**

As highlighted, Paul affirms that God has already “blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3). He stresses that the “blessing” is “in the heavenly places” and that the full inheritance is not yet ours though it is secured. He says that the Spirit of Christ in us “is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it” (Eph 1:14; cf. 2 Cor 1:20, 22).

Of all the blessings in Leviticus 26:3–12, verses 11–12 alone focus on the presence of God. The rest address various physical, material blessings of provision and protection. Paul’s use of Leviticus 26 in 2 Corinthians 6:16 (see above) suggests that old covenant original blessings matter for Christians.

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<sup>24</sup> For more examples of new covenant curses, see Matt 6:15; Rom 8:13; 11:22; 1 Cor 6:9–11; Gal 5:4, 19–21; Heb 2:3; 6:4–8; 10:28–31; 12:15; Rev 2:5, 16, 22–23; 22:19.

<sup>25</sup> For this view of the warning passages in Hebrews, see Christopher W. Cowan, “The Warning Passages of Hebrews and the New Covenant Community,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course Between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 189–213; cf. Christopher W. Cowan, “*Confident of Better Things*”: Assurance of Salvation in the Letter to the Hebrews (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); Thomas R. Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Run to Win the Prize: Perseverance in the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

Nevertheless, because the apostle focused only on the blessing related to God's presence in the midst of his people and not on the material sustenance and security, these latter elements are most likely identified with the future transformed earth. They are *already* our inheritance but *not yet* ours to enjoy in the fullness that we will in the age to come.

God does promise to "supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). Yet as Paul stresses earlier, we must be willing to let the Lord define our needs, learning how "to be brought low and ... how to abound" (4:12). Today we look to the Lord for daily bread (Matt 6:11), trusting that he values his people and will give food, drink, and clothing in due measure to those who "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (6:25–26, 31–33). We also rest confident in Jesus's command and promise, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap" (Luke 6:38). Yet as was clear in Paul's own life, having great faith in the truth of these promises does not secure a life free of beatings, stonings, shipwrecks, dangers, toil and hardship, sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, cold and exposure (2 Cor 11:23–28).<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, Jesus often healed physical sickness and charged his disciples to do the same (Matt 4:23; 10:6–8; Mark 2:8–12). Indeed, after a series of Jesus's healings (Matt 8:16–17), Matthew cites Isaiah 53:4–5, stating, "This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 'He took our illnesses and bore our diseases'" (8:17). Nevertheless, in Jesus's first coming he mostly restricted his ministry to the Jews (10:6–8), he only raised three people from the dead (i.e., the ruler's daughter, Mark 5:35–36, 41–43; the son of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:12–15; Lazarus, John 11:38–46), and he did not right all the wrongs or relieve all pains (Luke 4:16–21; 7:18–23). There is a tension we must hold in this "already-but-not yet" period: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold *now in this time*, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, *with persecutions*, and *in the age to come* eternal life" (Mark 10:29–30). We must live today recognizing the truth of Christ's declaration that "some of you they will put to death," while always trusting, "But not a hair of your head will perish" and "by your endurance you will gain your lives" (Luke 21:16, 18–19).<sup>27</sup>

Paul too healed only sporadically and does not appear to have expected that all would be healed in this age. He healed the crippled man in Lystra (Acts 14:10), the demonized girl in Philippi (16:18), many people in Ephesus (19:12), and Eutychus when he was taken up dead after falling out of a window (20:9–10). However, he couldn't gain relief from his "thorn," whether it be sickness or persecution (2 Cor 12:7), and he couldn't heal himself from the ailment that he had when he preached in Galatia (Gal 4:13–14). He also evidently couldn't heal Epaphroditus from his life threatening sickness (Phil 2:26–27), Timothy from his stomach ailments (1 Tim 5:23), or Trophimus whom he "left ill at Miletus" (2 Tim 4:20).

<sup>26</sup> Walter Kaiser observes, "Prosperity teachers tend to equate 'your Father knows what you need before you ask' (Matt 6:8) with 'everything our Li'l ol' heart wants.' But Jesus only pointed to three needs: food, drink, and clothing (Matt 6:8–32). Paul advised, 'If we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content' (1 Tim 6:8)." Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Old Testament Promise of Material Blessings and the Contemporary Believer," *TrinJ* 9.2 (1988): 165.

<sup>27</sup> Reflecting on Jesus's non-universal healings in his first coming, Kaiser notes, "Even if our LORD did perform a series of healing ministries as a fulfillment of what was spoken by Isaiah, was this more than a foretaste of the total restoration that was to come when our LORD returned the second time in all history? ... We conclude that there is healing in the atonement; we only contest how and when it is fully applicable. We think that believers will be finally delivered from the dread of disease only when our Lord has put all enemies under his feet, even death itself" (*Ibid.*, 167).

My point in all of this is to stress that the “living hope” into which God has caused us to be born relates “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet 1:3–4). The Spirit is *already* ours, but the inheritance is *not yet* (Eph 1:3, 13–14; cf. 2 Cor 1:22). Prosperity-gospel advocates are wrong in thinking that more faith will bring health and wealth today. They are also wrong not because they assert that old covenant blessings apply to Christians but because their eschatology is over-realized. They are wanting to bring the future into the present too quickly.

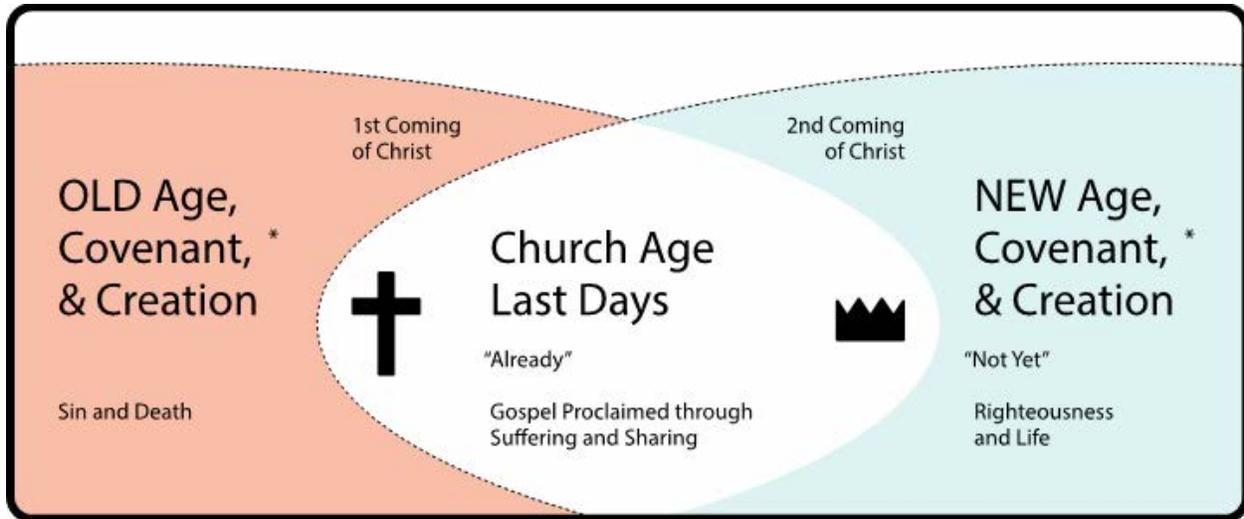


Figure 4. *The Overlap of the Ages*<sup>28</sup>

In this overlap of the ages, our future destiny is secure in Christ, but our physical body still rests firmly in the old, cursed creation. Nevertheless, for believers, experiencing the effects of the old age’s curse is now holiness-generating rather than destructive.

- The battle with sin is still evident, but God has freed believers from sin’s enslavement and condemnation. Furthermore, rather than being “given over” (παράδιδωμι) to rebellion and a debased mind (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), God now “gives us over” (παράδιδωμι) to obedience and a renewed mind (6:16–18; 12:2; cf. 7:22–23, 25).
- The battle with brokenness and decay is very apparent with every cold and every bout of cancer, 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).

<sup>28</sup> At one level, the old and new covenants do not actually overlap, for Jesus “makes the first one obsolete” and “does away with the first in order to establish the second” (Heb 8:13; 10:9). At another level, however, because the old (Mosaic) covenant represents the age of death in Adam, the writer of Hebrews can add, “And what is become obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (8:13), noting that while “the end of the ages” is already upon us (9:26), the consummation of “the age to come” has not yet been realized (6:5; cf. 2 Cor 3:11). We see a similar statement regarding the overlap of the old and new covenants in 2 Corinthians 3:14–15, where Paul identifies that “to this day” a “veil” remains over the eyes of hardened, non-believing Jews when they read the old covenant, for “only through Christ is it taken away.” This visual image originally appeared in Jason S. DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 39; used with permission.

- The battle with death looms over all of us, but in Christ the sting is removed and death becomes the channel to great reward. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21; cf. Rom 5:17; 6:23; Rev 22:4).

The NT is clear that believers in this age are to expect suffering, tribulation, and affliction of all sorts. Jesus said, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you” (John 15:20). He also stressed, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Discipleship comes at great cost (Luke 14:33; John 12:25). Just as Christ had to endure the cross before enjoying his resurrection-body, so too the church as the body of Christ must carry our cross, identifying with Christ in his suffering, before receiving our resurrection-bodies (Mark 8:34; 1 Pet 4:13). God’s discipline in our lives nurtures holiness and righteousness (Heb 12:7–11), and we endure today knowing that something better is coming tomorrow (10:34; 13:12–14; 1 Pet 1:6–7).

Paul said, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). God has granted that we “should not only believe in [Christ] but also suffer for his sake” (Phil 1:29). We are “destined” for “afflictions” (1 Thess 3:3), and “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12). Paul himself experienced trials far broader than persecution—“afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger” (2 Cor 6:4–5; cf. 11:23–28). As he did, he said, “In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:12–13).

If you are a believer, I encourage you to boldly claim the promises of God in *all* of Scripture, following the pattern of the NT authors. Any promise related to God’s presence, favor, power, or pleasure is *already* something that we can enjoy, for they come to us today by the Spirit of Christ. All other promises addressing more physical, material provision and protection are something that will indeed be realized, but such blessings are only certain at the consummation of the new heavens and new earth when we will receive our resurrection bodies and when there will be no more tears, death, mourning, crying, or pain (Rev 21:4).

“With the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption” (Ps 30:7). In light of his character, God may still be pleased at any moment to bring our future hope into the present through a miracle-act of power. We must, therefore, continue to seek that others be relieved of poverty (Deut 10:17–19; 15:11; Ps 41:1; Gal 2:10; 1 John 3:17) and to pray that God would heal those sick and suffering (Jas 5:13–15; cf. 1 Cor 12:9), all for God’s glory and his kingdom’s advance. God is pleased to magnify his power, but he can do this both by removing the pain or by sustaining us through it. The Lord will bring relief according to his timetable, manner, and degree, but we can trust that he will work all things out for our good (Rom 8:28) and that the day is coming when all will be restored and God’s people will never again hunger or thirst (Rev 7:15).

### 3.3. Consider How Christ’s Fulfillment of OT Hopes Influences Our Appropriation of OT Promises

Jesus highlighted how he came not “to abolish” or to set aside the predictive anticipations of the Law and the Prophets but “to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17; cf. 11:13; Luke 16:16), actualizing what Scripture anticipated and achieving what God promised and predicted. Similarly, Paul emphasized that “all the promises of God find their Yes *in* [Christ]” (2 Cor 1:20). Indeed, “[God] has blessed us *in* Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3). “*In* Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham [comes] to the Gentiles” (Gal 3:14). The OT promises become operative for believers only through

## Is Every Promise “Yes”?

Jesus.<sup>29</sup> His death and resurrection give living hope that every promise will indeed come to pass (1 Pet 1:3–4), and his Spirit supplies the “guarantee” of our future inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:14).

In order to consider how OT promises relate to Christians, we must approach the promises through a salvation-historical framework that has Jesus at the center. That is, we must filter every promise through the lens of Christ in order to consider its contemporary relevance for us.<sup>30</sup> This filtering is important because the way Jesus fulfills the various OT promises is not static. Through Christ, God maintains many of the promises without altering their nature (as if they go through the center of the lens, gaining focus but not change). Of these, some find no new referents, whereas others extend to include new contexts and recipients in light of the way Christ redefines God’s people. When other promises channel through the lens of Christ’s fulfillment, they get “bent,” whether due to their already being completed or because Jesus in some way transforms them, trumping shadow with reality or bringing a type to its antitype (see fig. 5). In order to faithfully appropriate an OT promise, believers must faithfully consider its original historical and literary context and then assess how Christ’s salvation-historical work informs our appropriation.

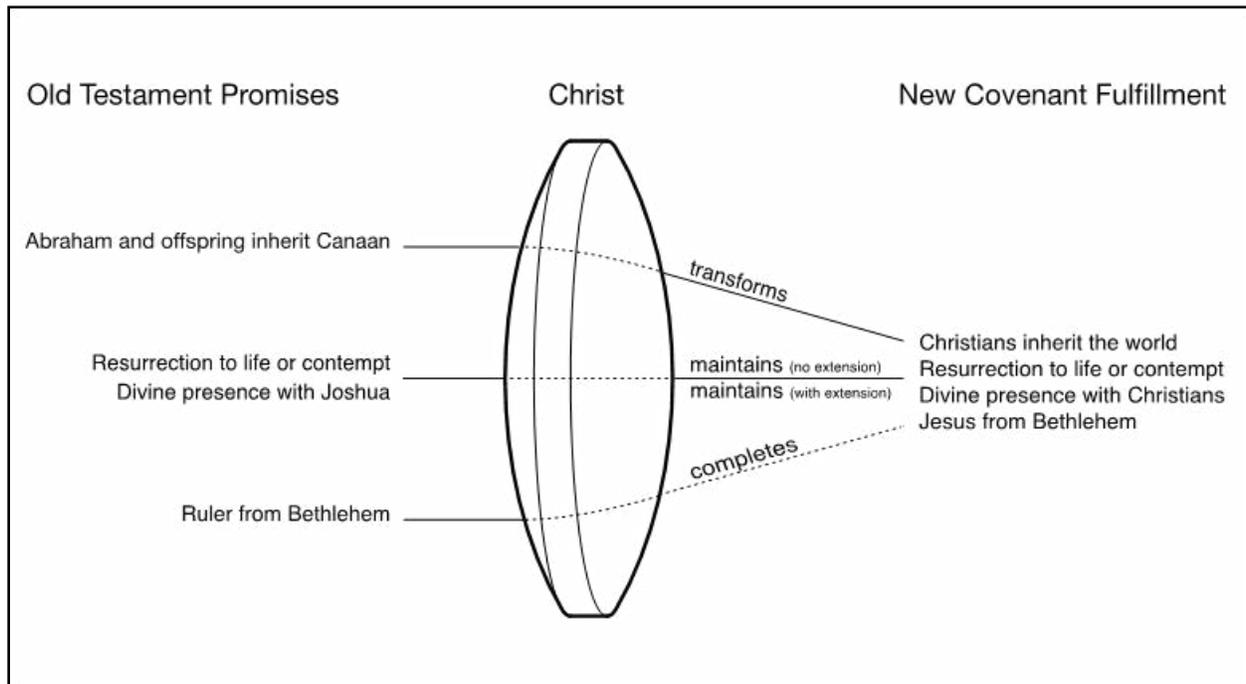


Figure 5. *The Fulfillment of OT Promises through the “Lens” of Christ*

<sup>29</sup> This is so because through his death and resurrection Christ purchased both common grace (Gen 8:20–21; Rom 2:4) and saving grace (Rom 3:24; 5:8–9), justifying every expression of God’s kindness, forbearance, patience toward sinners and identifying his just severity toward the same (3:25–26).

<sup>30</sup> Starling helpfully notes, “For Paul, the death of Christ is ... not only a soteriological event (reconciling Jew and Gentile to God) and an ecclesiological event (reconciling Jew and Gentile to one another within the ‘new humanity’ of the church) but also a hermeneutical event, transforming the relationship of his readers to the scriptural promise, law and covenants” (Starling, “The Yes to All God’s Promises,” 196). Disappointedly, Starling’s own hermeneutical proposal fails to work enough through a salvation-historical framework and to consider the way Christ’s promise-fulfillment impacts the Christian’s appropriation of OT promises.

### 3.3.1. OT Promises Maintained (No Extension)

Many of the promises that are *maintained* without any extension of referent are those that were already explicitly restoration promises and included a vision of global salvation after Israel's exile. Consider, for example, Daniel 12:2: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Likely alluding to this text, Jesus asserted, "An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of Man's] voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28–29; cf. 11:11). Similarly, Paul said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.... For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor 15:51–52). Christians can hope in the future resurrection, claiming the promise of Daniel 12:2 as our own! We do so, however, recognizing that we will only rise because Christ was first raised. "Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.... Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor 15:20, 23). As Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

The OT identifies that the Messiah's resurrection would precede and facilitate our own. As Luke noted, "Thus *it is written* that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (Luke 24:46). Paul too claimed "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on third day *in accordance with the Scriptures*, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (1 Cor 15:3–5).<sup>31</sup> The OT portrays YHWH as one who would raise the dead: "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal" (Deut 32:39). Speaking to a people that God had already torn and struck down, Hosea said, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him" (Hos 6:2). The resurrection of God's people would come *on the third day*. On this basis, YHWH questioned, "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?" And he responded, "O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? (Hos 13:14; cf. 1 Cor 15:55). Earlier, in the very context where Hannah prophesied that God would "give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed," she proclaimed, "The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam 2:7, 10).

David, too, captured the Messiah's journey through tribulation unto triumph in Psalm 22, which opens with the king crying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1; cf. Matt 27:46). He is "scorned by mankind and despised by the people," with some mocking him and wagging their heads (Ps 22:6–8; cf. 2:1; Matt 27:39, 43). His strength and mouth are dried up (Ps 22:15; John 19:28). He is encircled by evildoers who pierce his hands and feet and then cast lots for his clothing (Ps 22:16–18; cf. Matt 27:35; Luke 24:39–40; John 19:24), yet not one of his bones is broken (Ps 22:17; 34:20; John 19:46). He declares, "You lay me in the dust of death" (Ps 22:15), but he then proclaims, "You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen. I will tell of your name to my brothers" (22:21–22; cf. Matt 28:10; Heb 2:10–12).

<sup>31</sup> For more on the OT predictions of Christ's third-day resurrection, see Mitchell L. Chase, "The Genesis of Resurrection Hope: Exploring Its Early Presence and Deep Roots," *JETS* 57 (2014): 467–80; Nicholas P. Lunn, "Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures': Resurrection Typology in the Genesis Creation Narrative," *JETS* 57 (2014): 523–35; Stephen G. Dempster, "From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone: The Resurrection of Christ on 'the Third Day' According to the Scriptures," *WTJ* 76 (2014): 371–409; Joel White, "He Was Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:4): A Typological Interpretation Based on the Cultic Calendar in Leviticus 23," *TynBul* 66 (2015): 103–19.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 comparably promises the royal servant’s victory over death. Isaiah asserts:

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. 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. (Isa 53:10–11)

Our right standing with God and our hope is built solely on the death and resurrection of the Christ, who suffered as a sacrifice but who now sees and is satisfied in his saints.

The resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment are two of “the elementary doctrine[s] of Christ” (Heb 6:1–2). Daniel 12:2 gives Christians hope because Christ, who rose from the dead, has claimed us as his own. “For 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).

### *3.3.2. OT Promises Maintained (with Extension)*

While God maintains the nature of most OT promises on each side of the cross, at times Christ’s fulfillment extends the parties related to the promise. We see this operative in the way the author of Hebrews 13:5 applies to all Christians battling covetousness the promise of God’s presence given to Joshua regarding the conquest in Joshua 1:5. The Lord said to Moses’s successor, “Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them” (Josh 1:5–6). The Lord gave this promise to Israel’s leader, and the implication was that if God was with Joshua, then those who followed him would also enjoy God’s presence.

In Hebrews, the OT’s wilderness and conquest narratives play an important role in magnifying the way Christ and the new covenant are better. Moses was faithful to God “as a servant,” whereas Christ was faithful “as a son” (Heb 3:5). Most in the exodus generation rebelled, hardening their hearts in unbelief, and because of this YHWH declared, “They shall not enter my rest” (3:7–11). Some like Joshua believed that God was able to secure rest, but all others died because of unbelief (4:2). Later Joshua did lead Israel into the Promised Land, but the rest he secured was only temporary and predictive of the greater rest that the more supreme Joshua (i.e., Jesus) secured for all (4:8).

Within this framework, if the Lord was with the first Joshua and all who followed him, how much more can we be assured that he will be with those identified with the greater Joshua! The original promise given to one man expands to be a promise given to all in Christ. We already share in Christ Jesus (3:14) but have not yet inherited the promises (6:12). But because God has promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (13:5), we can rest secure knowing that our full inheritance will come. We are thus freed to live radically for God in the present, unencumbered by “the love of money” and finding contentment with all we have (13:5). Knowing that God is for us and with us helps us “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely” (12:1). We look “to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2). And as we consider “him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself,” we are helped to “not grow weary or fainthearted” (12:3). God’s presence and favor are our hope and our security. “For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one” (10:34).

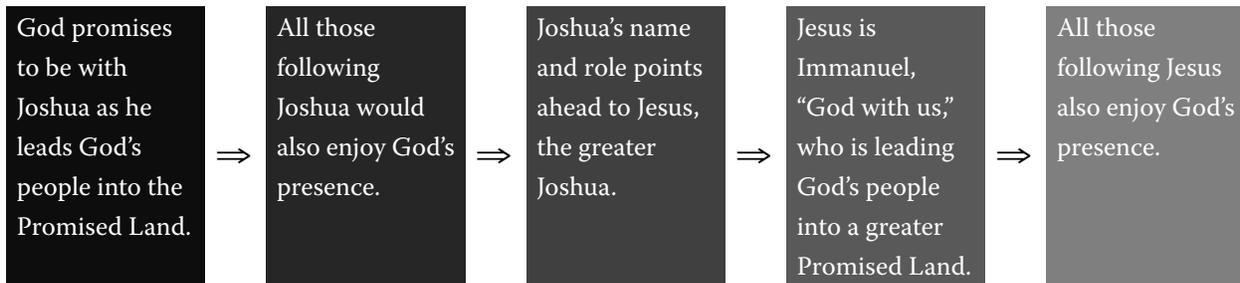


Figure 6. *God Maintains the Promise of His Presence While Extending It to All in Christ.*

Isaiah 49:6 supplies another example of an OT promise that Christ's fulfillment *maintains with extended referents*. In this third servant song, Isaiah portrays the coming royal deliver as speaking in first person. He says that the Lord called him from the womb, named him "Israel," and commissioned him as "his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him" (49:1, 3, 5). This is perhaps the clearest OT text that *Jesus is Israel*, the one representing the many in every way. Then in 49:6 we read YHWH's declaration, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Through the coming Messiah, God would save not only ethnic Israelites but also some from the nations, thus fulfilling his earlier promises to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 22:18).

As we enter the NT, we find Simeon, who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25), declaring by the Holy Spirit that Jesus was none other than God's "salvation," which he "prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (2:30–32). Similarly, Paul emphasized that both the prophets and Moses said that, following his death and resurrection, the Messiah "would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23). Both of these texts allude to Isaiah 49:6 and identify Christ as the direct fulfillment of this promise.

The extension of this promise comes in Paul's earlier words to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, where he declares with reference to him and Barnabas, "The Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth'" (13:47). What was a promise related to the servant Christ has now become a commission for all identified with him. As Isaiah himself anticipated, following the work of the one servant-king (singular) (Isa 42:1; 49:3, 5–7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11; cf. Acts 4:27–30), God would commission many priestly "servants" (plural) from both Jews and the Gentiles to carry on the work of the Messiah (e.g., Isa 54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8–9, 13–15; 66:14). Paul saw himself as one of these ambassadors (Isa 42:6–7 with Acts 26:15–18, 22–23; Isa 49:6 with Acts 13:45–48; Isa 49:8 with 2 Cor 6:1–4). Jesus's cross-work had purchased Paul's rescue from sin and God's wrath, and now the apostle was bound as "a servant" of his savior (cf. Rom 1:1 with 6:20, 22).

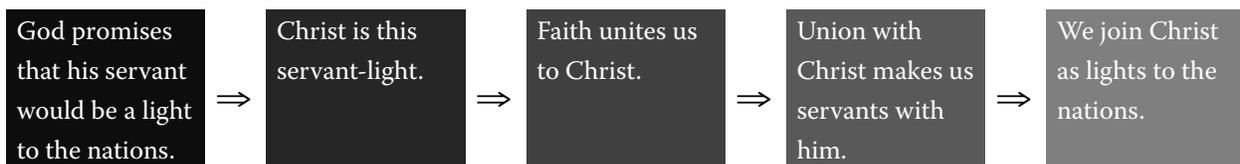
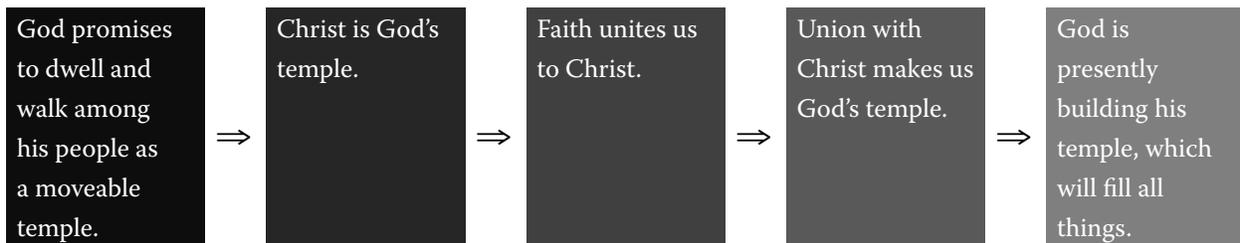


Figure 7. *God Maintains the Promise of Serving as a Light While Extending It to All in Christ.*

As a further example of an extended promise, we can assess Leviticus 26:11–12 that I cited above. It’s an old covenant original blessing (not a restoration blessing), conditioned on the nation’s obedience: “If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ... I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” Paul in turn cites this text as support for his claim that “we [the church] are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16). The promise stands, but through Christ its application gets extended. Christ is the ultimate temple (John 2:21; cf. 1:14), and when we unite with him by faith, we enjoy his tabernacling presence—we become the temple (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16).



*Figure 8. God Maintains the Promise of His Dwelling While Extending It to All in Christ.*

In the days of Leviticus, YHWH was already inhabiting the material tabernacle, wherein he “walked” with Israel through the wilderness (Deut 23:14 [23:15 MT]; cf. 2 Sam 7:6–7). What Leviticus 26:11–12 portrays as *future* promise, therefore, likely points to a reality beyond the physical dwelling place (whether tabernacle or temple) to a grander manifestation on earth of the ultimate heavenly temple that served as the earthly tent’s pattern (Exod 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; cf. Acts 7:44). Because what Moses, and later Solomon and Zerubbabel, built on earth was only a model of a heavenly reality (cf. 1 Chr 28:11–12, 18–19), the earthly “picture” bore a built-in obsolescence. The author of Hebrews touches on this fact when he writes, “[The old covenant priests] serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’... Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (Heb 8:5; 9:24; cf. 9:11–12). Moses words in Leviticus 26:11–12 appear to anticipate that the pictorial earthly structure would be superseded when God’s obedient “son” would fulfill his covenant obligations.

The temporary quality of the earthly sanctuary is highlighted in the way the moveable tabernacle gives rise to a stationary temple. Then, after God’s presence departs from Jerusalem (Ezek 8–11), he lets the temple itself be destroyed (Ezek 33:21; cf. 2 Kgs 25). Yet the prophet also anticipated a day when the Lord would again dwell in the midst of his people, declaring that the transformed city would be called, “The LORD Is There” (Ezek 48:35). Echoing Leviticus 26:11–12 but now shaped as a restoration blessing, YHWH stated in Ezekiel 37:27–28, “My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forever.” Associated with this promise is that “David my servant shall be their prince forever” (37:25) and that the people themselves would operate as God’s temple, enjoying his indwelling presence and giving witness to God’s greatness before the onlooking nations: “And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live” (37:14), and again, “The nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes....

I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (36:23, 27). Earlier Isaiah had aligned the people with the city of Jerusalem, when he wrote, “And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken” (Isa 62:12). Similarly, Jeremiah identified the new Zion with both the temple and people, when he predicted that one day all of Jerusalem would be God’s throne (and not just the ark of the covenant), and that gathered there would be the redeemed from both the nations and a reunited house of Israel (Jer 3:16–18).

While Zerubbabel helped oversee the building of a second temple, Haggai looked further ahead to a greater glory, suggesting that the earthly temple would be transformed: “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace” (Hag 2:9). Even more, Zechariah said that the coming Messiah would build this temple with the aid of “those who are far off,” and he would serve as God’s priest-king, reigning from God’s temple-throne: “It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zech 6:13, 15; cf. 1 Sam 2:35). The return of YHWH’s presence to the temple would happen at the day of the Lord (Mal 3:2).<sup>32</sup>

As noted, the future tabernacling presence to which Leviticus 26:11–12 points was conditioned on the obedience of God’s covenant “son.” This conditional structure echoes YHWH’s earlier declaration: “Be a blessing, so that I may bless those who bless you ... with the result that in you all the families of the ground may be blessed” (Gen 12:2–3, author’s translation). Israel, as God’s corporate “son” (Exod 4:22–23), “dealt corruptly” with the Lord, so Moses declared that “they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation” (Deut 32:5; cf. Acts 2:40; Phil 2:15). Because Israel failed to reflect, resemble, and represent God as a true son should, displaying his image and likeness (Gen 5:1–3), the Lord promised to curse them, asserting, “You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth” (Deut 32:18).

Nevertheless, YHWH had already identified that he would defeat the evil one that originally separated mankind from his tabernacling presence in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:8). He would do this, however, *not* by his corporate son (the nation) but by a single, male, royal priest-son. A male offspring of the woman would bruise the skull of the serpent (Gen 3:15). He would be a Shemite (9:26–27) in the lines of Abraham (22:17b–18) and Judah (49:8–10), and only in his day would the enemy gates be brought down and God’s blessing extend to the world (22:17b–18; 26:3–4; cf. 17:4–6). As God’s ideal priest-king, he would live righteously, embodying God’s character portrayed in his law (Deut 17:18–20; 1 Sam 2:35;

<sup>32</sup> In light of the fact that the “messenger” that Malachi anticipates to prepare the way for the Lord is tagged “Elijah” (Mal 3:1; 4:5–6 [3:23–24 MT]) and refers to John the Baptist (Matt 11:10, 14; Luke 1:17; 7:27), the return of the Lord to his temple (Mal 3:2) likely points to the coming of Christ as the temple (John 1:14; 2:21). Nevertheless, there is at least some evidence that God’s presence may have returned to the second temple in a way similar to how he filled the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35) and Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11; cf. 2 Chr 7:1–2). Specifically, Malachi’s older contemporary Zechariah, whose preaching helped motivate the building of the second temple, declared, “Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion [a persistent perfect *qatal* with present time implications] and will dwell [a *w<sup>o</sup>qatal* with future sense] in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called a faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain” (Zech 8:3). Similarly, Jesus seems to assume God’s presence in the earthly temple, unless he is speaking of the more ultimate heavenly reality for which the earthly temple was but a model: “And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it” (Matt 23:21). The story of Zechariah’s becoming mute when performing his high priestly role could also suggest that YHWH inhabited the second temple (Luke 1:11).

Isa 11:5 with 59:17). He would enjoy the power of God, sit on God’s throne, and enjoy faithful followers (1 Sam 2:10, 35; cf. Zech 6:13, 15). His exalted reign would make his people like a restored garden of Eden (Num 24:5–7), as his own new creational sprouts (Isa 6:13; 11:1; 53:2) would produce fruit (61:3, 11). As king, he would represent the people (cf. Num 23:24; 24:9), even bearing their name “Israel” (Isa 49:3, 5; cf. Hos 14:5–8). He would “crush the forehead” of his enemies (Num 24:17), and those who bless him would be blessed, whereas those who curse him would be cursed (24:9; cf. Gen 12:3).

This royal and priestly “son” of God (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7) would be intimately identified with YHWH himself. The servant-king’s “law” (Isa 42:4) would be YHWH’s law (2:3; 51:4). The child-king would be Immanuel (“God with us”) (7:14), and his royal name would be “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6). He would operate as the Lord’s very “arm” working salvation (53:1; 59:16). Even more, like the ark in the temple’s Most Holy Place, “the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (11:2; cf. 42:1; 61:1). Isaiah seems to envision that the presence of God that once was separated from the people in the central sanctuary would now be connected to the people through this unique servant-son (32:15; 44:3).

Filling up all of these OT hopes, God’s eternal Son the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus identified himself as “the temple,” and the disciples recognized this fact after his resurrection (2:19–22). In Christ, worship of God is no longer centralized at any geographically located sanctuary. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman: “The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (4:21, 23). Wherever people encounter Jesus, the temple is realized, for those who believe in him become “members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:19–21).<sup>33</sup>

With a potential echo of Leviticus 26:11, we become “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). As Christ is the temple, so all who are in him become God’s temple (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Pet 2:5) and operate as priests who proclaim light and life in the dark world (1 Pet 2:9).<sup>34</sup> And the temple has expanded to fill the globe as Christians, filled with the Spirit of Christ, have borne witness to him “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In meeting Jesus, believers have come to the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22), to “the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands” (Heb 9:11). Nevertheless, we still await the day when the holy city itself will come down from heaven, when “the dwelling place of God is with man” (Rev 21:2–3). Then the Most Holy Place will be all that we enjoy, for the temple of the city will be “the Lord God the Almighty and the

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<sup>33</sup> Commenting on Ephesians 2:20–22, Timothy Gombis writes, “Verse 21 states that though the building has been built (ἐποικοδομηθέντες), it is ‘being joined together’ (συναρμολογουμένη) and is ‘growing (αὐξει) into a holy temple in the Lord. In verse 22, they are ‘being built up (συναικοδομεῖσθε) into a dwelling of God by the Spirit.’ So, while the church as the dwelling place of God by the Spirit is an accomplished reality, it is also a process which stands in need of being increasingly actualized” (Timothy G. Gombis, “Being the Fullness of God in Christ by the Spirit: Ephesians 5:18 in Its Epistolary Setting,” *TynBul* 53 (2002): 261.

<sup>34</sup> T. D. Alexander writes, “Since Christ’s body is the temple of God and since, as Paul repeatedly emphasizes, Christians are those who are ‘in Christ,’ it naturally follows that the church, as the body of Christ, is also the temple of God.” T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 71.

Lamb” (21:22). Then God will have made some “from every tribe and language and people and nation” into “a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (5:9–10).

In much the same manner, I would appropriate other promises that God gave to the broader old covenant community—promises like, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isa 41:10). And, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer 29:11). Through Jesus, all these promises given to Israel extend to the church—not to any geopolitical people or territory but to the church. Because Jesus fully represents national Israel in every way (Gal 3:16; cf. Isa 49:3, 6) and because no one inherits blessings apart from faith in Christ (Gal 3:7, 9), all those adopted into Christ by faith receive all the benefits of being part of his family, whether Jew or Gentile (3:29; 4:5). We are all “one in Christ” (3:28), “one new man” (Eph 2:15), together enjoying “adoption as sons” (1:5) with equal partnership in the “inheritance of the saints” (Col 1:12; cf. Gal 3:18; Eph 3:6). This structure of inheritance rights is no different than how my adopted and biological kids together enjoy every benefit of being a DeRouchie. As their parent, I do not try to give any preferential treatment, for all bear the same family identity and are truly my children. How much more is this true in the household of God, where *every* child of the king, both Jew and Gentile, are adopted into Christ.

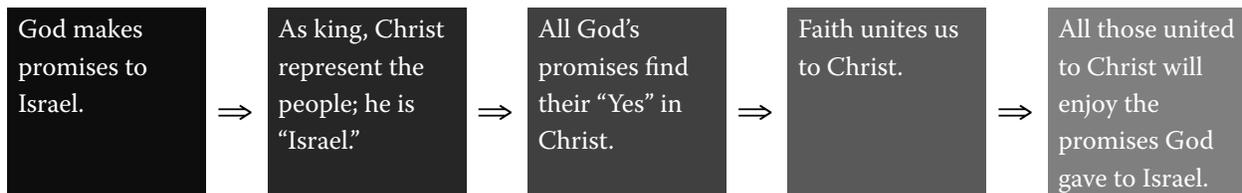


Figure 9. *God Maintains His Promises to Israel While Extending Them to All in Christ*

### 3.3.3. OT Promises Completed

There are some OT promises whose fulfillment is already fully *completed* in Christ. These promises play a significant role for believers, for their fulfillment supplies proof that God will indeed bring to completion all the rest of his promises (Deut 18:22; Ezek 33:33; cf. Rom 8:32). The lasting significance of these promises, therefore, comes in the way they nurture present confidence in God’s faithfulness and, at times, in the way their fulfillment bears a continuing impact. We see one such example in the prophet Micah’s prediction that a long-prophesied ruler in Israel would rise from Bethlehem (Mic 5:2), which Matthew identifies is fulfilled in Christ’s birth (Matt 2:6). There is only one Christ, and he was only born once. Nevertheless, his birth was to spark a global return of “his brothers,” and as king he would “shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,” 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, and Christ’s birth in Bethlehem validates for us the certainty of his permanent and global exaltation.

Another example is YHWH’s promise to Solomon that, because he asked for wisdom rather than long life or riches or punishment on his enemies, God would give him both wisdom *and* riches and honor (1 Kings 3:11–13). This promise was “Yes” in Christ in that on the cross Jesus purchased every divine bestowal of kindness, forbearance, and patience experienced in the realm of common grace (Gen 8:20–21; Rom 2:4; 3:25–26). Nevertheless, the specificity of the promise itself, being contingent on

one man’s request and including blessing related to one man’s specific reign, identify that this is not a promise that any person and at any time enjoys. Unlike YHWH’s promise to Joshua in Joshua 1:5, which was true for all who followed him (see below), this promise was unique to Solomon himself, with other benefiting only from the wisdom, riches, and honor he himself enjoyed.

### 3.3.4. OT Promises Transformed

The final way that Christ fulfills some OT promises is by transforming them. By this I mean that both the promise’s makeup and audience get developed.<sup>35</sup> These promises relate most directly to shadows that point to a greater substance in Christ or to OT patterns or types that find their climax or antitype in Christ. This discussion within the paper will likely be the most controversial in certain theological circles, but I will offer my understanding of how these promises are working.<sup>36</sup>

Our main example will relate to God’s promise to Abraham and his offspring that they would inherit the land of Canaan, a promise that I believe is then transformed in the new covenant to include the church’s title to the whole world in the new earth. In Paul words, God promised “Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the *world*” (Rom 4:13).

Directly after asserting to Abraham, “I have made you the father of a multitude of nations,” YHWH pledged, “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” (Gen 17:5, 8). In Genesis, the land promise is directly associated with Abraham’s being the father of *one* nation, which we now know as Israel (12:1–2). The period of the Mosaic covenant saw the realization of this promise of land, in direct fulfillment of stage one of the Abrahamic covenant, wherein God’s people were to become a geopolitical nation (Exod 2:24; 6:8; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 30:20; 34:4). Indeed, in direct echo of Genesis 22:17 and 15:18, the narrator declares in 1 Kings 4:20–21, “Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt.”

Yet the vision of Genesis looked ahead to the day that Abraham would be the father not just of a nation but of *nations*—something that would happen only when the single, male offspring would rise as an agent of global blessing. In the words of Genesis 22:17b–18, “And your offspring will possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Here a single, male deliver would overcome the world’s curse, and in his day God’s kingdom territory would expand to include the once-enemy strongholds. We see a similar statement made to Isaac in 26:3–4. Note the distinction between the singular “land” and the plural “lands”: “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” In 22:18, the “seed” that would serve as a channel of blessing was marked as *singular*, which suggests

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<sup>35</sup> For more on the element of transformation, see my discussion in DeRouchie, “Counting Stars with Abraham and the Prophets,” 480–81 and note 98.

<sup>36</sup> For a recent exceptional overview of typology and transformation as I understand it, see Brent E. Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 39–68.

that this more ambiguous use of “seed” is also singular. Moses directly associates the promise of the “land” expanding to “lands” with the male deliverer, whom Paul identifies as Christ.

Relooking at a text that we have already meditated on, the apostle asserts in Galatians 3:16, “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring’ [καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου] who is Christ.” The highlighted Greek phrase occurs in the Septuagint version of Genesis in only three places, all of which are *land* promises (Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7). While the plural “promises” (ἐπαγγελίαι) in Galatians 3:16 suggests that *all* the promises of land, seed, and blessing find their fulfillment in Christ, the fact that Paul specifically cites the *land* promise from Genesis highlights how only in relation to Christ can we understand the land inheritance.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, *all* in Christ would equally enjoy the promise of both the “land” and the “lands.” “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29).

A number of points in the NT highlight the global inheritance that Christ secures for his saints, all in fulfillment of the OT land promise. Along with Paul’s assertion in Romans 4:13 that God declared to “Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world,” we read in Matthew 5:8, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Similarly, in Ephesians 6:2–3, the apostle motivates the command to honor one’s parents from Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 with the promise, “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” By omitting the clause “that the LORD your God is giving you,” Paul appears to be supplying broader, more universal application to the promise.<sup>38</sup> Finally, in Hebrews 11 we learn that Abraham “was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Heb 11:10). Indeed, folks like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah all recognized that their immediate earthly inheritance was *not* the ultimate hope. “They were strangers and exiles on earth.... They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city” (11:13, 16).

This “city” is none other than “Mount Zion ... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” to which all who are Christians have *already* come (12:22; cf. Gal 4:26). Nevertheless, we still await the day when “a new heaven and new earth”—that is, “the holy city, the new Jerusalem”—will come “down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:1–2). In that day, “the dwelling of God” will be with mankind. “He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (21:3). In this city, all nations will find healing and rest forevermore in the presence of God (22:1–2).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Paul’s explicit language of “inheritance” in Galatians 3:18 is most likely rooted in the OT “land” promise (e.g., Num 26:53–56; Josh 11:23) (so Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 230; cf. Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 155). Cf. Num 18:20; 32:18–19; 33:54; 34:2; Deut 4:21, 38; 12:9; 15:4; 19:14; 20:16; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1; Josh 13:6–8; 24:28.

<sup>38</sup> So too Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 405; Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 398; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 444.

<sup>39</sup> For a concise synopsis of this approach to the land promises, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 703–16; Oren R. Martin, “The Land Promise Biblically and Theologically Understood,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016), 255–74. Cf. Paul R. Williamson, “Promise and Fulfill-

#### 4. Conclusion

Isaiah declared that throughout the ages no ear has heard nor eye has seen a God like ours “who acts for those who wait for him” (Isa 64:4). The call of the biblical text, therefore, is that we would trust in the promises of God. Just before Paul asserted that “all the promises of God find their Yes in [Christ]” (2 Cor 1:20), he asserted “God is faithful” (1:18). “The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works” (Ps 145:13). “The Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one” (2 Thess 3:3). “If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:11–13). “Let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust [your] souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (1 Pet 4:19). Remember also that, “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). One day, God will complete all of his promises to us in Christ. And we will say in that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isa 25:9).

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