

KINGDOM SPIRIT



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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 703

GENESIS 12 -16

In our last issue we touched on chapter 12 of Genesis as God told Abram to leave the land of his father's and go to a land God would show him, which turned out to be the land of Canaan. Abram believed God and took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and traveled to the land of Canaan.

When God told Abram to make the move, He also made some promises to Abram. Gen. 12:2,3 records these promises, **“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”** A little later we will see that God continued to make promises to Abram. These promises, in effect, are the foundation of all that we see happen in the rest of the Bible, so it is important that we take some time to understand them. In my mind there are ten basic promises, plus a very important eleventh promise that we will deal with later. For now, let us look at these ten promises in detail. Some of the promises were expanded upon and some repeated.

- 1. I will make of thee a great nation.**
(Gen. 12:2)

- a) Thou shalt be a father of many nations.** (Gen. 17:4)

- b) I will make nations of thee.**
(Gen. 17:6)

- 2. Kings shall come out of thee.**
(Gen. 17:6)

- 3. I will bless thee.**
(Gen. 12:2)

- a) That in blessing, I will bless thee.** (Gen 22:17)

- 4. (I will) make thy name great.**
(Gen. 12:2)

- 5. Thou shalt be a blessing.**
(Gen. 12:2)

- a) In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**
(Gen. 12:3)

- b) In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.**
(Gen. 22:18)

- 6. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.**
(Gen. 12:3)

- 7. Unto thy seed will I give this land.**
(Gen. 12:7)

- a) Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.**
(Gen. 15:18)

- b) I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee...all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession.**
(Gen. 17:8)

8. I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

(Gen. 13:16)

a) Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

(Gen. 15:5)

b) In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.

(Gen. 22:17)

c) I will make thee exceeding fruitful.

(Gen. 17:6)

9. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

(Gen. 15:1)

a) (I will) be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

(Gen. 17:7)

b) I will be their God.

(Gen. 17:8)

10. Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

(Gen. 22:17)

Though I have numbered these promises as I see them, the number is not important so long as we understand the promises. As I have them numbered, we see in number 1 that God would make of Abram a great nation and then many nations. We won't see this begin to happen until we get into Exodus and see the organizing of the children of Israel into a nation at Mt. Sinai as they began their exodus from Egypt. The actual organization began in Ex. 19. Later we find a revolt in II Chronicles 10, that divided the Kingdom of Israel into two kingdoms. Later each of these two kingdoms ended up in captivity, Israel under the Assyrians and Judah under Babylon. Secular history tells us that as these kingdoms came out of captivity, particularly Israel, they further divided into several nations as they migrated westward.

Promise number 2 tells us kings were to come out of Abram. Kings simply means rulers or counselors. This promise actually has two meanings. First and foremost, Jesus Christ, King of Kings, descended from Abram. Secondly, as we see the Bible story, or God's plan and purpose for man, unfold, we'll see that it is God's intent to develop a nation of rulers to rule the whole world with Him.

Concerning the third promise, the Bible story will reveal great blessings from God on Abram's seed, though seldom, if ever, warranted. That Abram's (or Abraham's as we will know him shortly) name is great, is attested by the fact that, not only is it great in Christianity, but also in one of the other major religions of the world, the Muslim religion. His name is probably respected and revered by more people than any other man's name in history.

The apostle Paul, in Gal. 3:16, tells us the importance of promise number 5. **"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."** It is in Christ, first and foremost, that all the earth is to be blessed. However, as we trace this family of Abram through the centuries to follow, we'll see that the blessing of this people to the rest of the world does not stop with the blessing of Christ.

The sixth promise is the one we hear about most today from the people we now call Jews and their supporters, but as we continue our study, we'll see that it is very badly misappropriated. This promise is a very good study into the sovereignty of God, something this story the Bible tells, will teach us.

Not only is the land promise (#7) still in effect, we will see as we continue our study that God greatly expanded this promise to Abram's seed. We will need to see and understand this.

Ironically, the promise repeated the most times here in Genesis, that Abram would have a very great multitude of descendants, (#8) is the promise most ignored today, as it doesn't fit into much of the false doctrine being taught. But, we will see that the Bible gives us clear evidence that

God keeps this as well as all of the promises.

Unfortunately, we often take the ninth promises for granted today without really appreciating what is involved with it. As we learn more about the sovereignty of our God, we will gain considerable understanding into this promise.

The tenth promise possibly has a two fold meaning. Virtually all countries or cities have primary routes of access which, if controlled by someone else, would mean they would control that country or city. But I believe the primary meaning has to do with what the gates of the city meant governmentally. The gates of the city were the equivalent to today's city hall or capitol building where the leaders of government met to make decisions concerning ruling the city or country. If someone else controlled the gate, it would mean they ruled the city or country.

To help us begin to get a perspective on how important these promises are, let us take a peek at how the apostle Paul saw them. Rom. 4:13 tells us, **“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”** As Paul saw the promises, the sum total meant that Abraham and his seed would inherit (or rule) the world. I believe we will see the same as we study this story, or plan, and will find it extremely interesting to see how God brings all of this about.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. We need to back up to Gen. 15 to see a very interesting story. We are told in verse 6 that Abram believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. This is quite a statement considering that God had made these promises to Abram and his seed, but up to this point Abram had no children. Not disbelieving, but thinking to help God out, Abram offered to accept Eliezer, his steward or servant, as his heir. God told Abram that that was not acceptable to Him, but that Abraham's heir would come from Abram and repeated the land promise. Abram then asked a natural question, **“Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?”**

Today if we are going to make a legal contract, we have both parties to the contract sign it before a Notary Public and then file the contract as a public record at our courthouse. They had a slightly different practice then. If two men were making a contract, they would take an animal (a sheep, goat, or bullock) and divide it in half. Then the two would walk arm in arm between the halves, in effect saying, may the same happen to me if I should fail to honor this contract or covenant. To emphasize the importance of a contract or covenant God was going to make with Abram, God told Abram to take 3 animals (heifer, goat and ram) and two birds and prepare them for the covenanting ceremony. Abram did as he was told and waited on God. Finally as the sun was setting, instead of God and Abram doing the ceremony together, God caused Abram to go into a deep sleep and God, by Himself, in the form of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the halves of the animals. The effect of this is that God made the promises totally unconditional. Whether these promises were kept or not was totally God's responsibility. Their keeping was not dependent on the performance of Abram or his seed at all. This is an extremely important fact for us to keep in mind as we continue our study.

While this unconditional covenanting appears to apply only to the land inheritance in chapter 15, if we read Gen. 22:16-18 and Heb. 6:13-14, we'll see that it applied to all of the promises.

Heb. 6:17-18 also confirms the unconditional nature of these promises, **“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”** This was the first of these two immutable things. The unconditional nature of these promises has had, and will have a definite bearing on history, past, present and future, even into eternity. Some have argued that the fact that Abram was humble before God and believed Him, was in effect a condition. It may well ha

have been a reason God made the promises to Abram, but it would not have been a condition that had to be met for God to carry out these promises, Gen. 22:16 begins, **“By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord.”** If we look ahead to God confirming these promises to Isaac and Jacob in Gen. 26:3 and 28:12-15 respectively, God again confirms that He swore to keep the promises. As we continue to study, we’ll see references to these unconditional promises all the way through the Bible. For now, however, let us believe God and watch to see how these promises are carried out.

Next month, we will deal with the special eleventh promise and how Abram’s name was changed to Abraham in connection with the promise.

If you have any question concerning this article, please write or call as I cannot stress enough the importance of it in understanding the rest of the Bible. **JRL**

THE BRIDE AND THE CHURCH

Our study so far concerning the bride of Christ and the church has centered around the bride which we found to be the Israel kingdom structure of government, represented by the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21. Many people have considered the church to be the bride, so we need to take a good look at the church of scripture to see if this is the case. If so, we need to ask if the church and kingdom are one and the same. If not, what part does the church play? With these questions in mind let us look at the church as presented in scripture.

First we need to note that the Greek word for our English word “church” is *kyriakes* and this word is not found in the Greek New Testament writings. The Greek word that is translated “church” in our New Testament is *ekklesia*. It is translated “church” in the King James New Testa-

ment 112 times and “assembly” 3 times. Strangely enough, “assembly” is a more accurate translation, at least in the way we define the word “church” today. Young’s Analytical Concordance defines *ekklesia* as “that which is called out.” Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance defines it as “a calling out, i.e. (concr.) a popular meeting, espec. A religious congregation.”

The word “church” is used to represent several different and/or different types of assemblies. The context in which we find the word “church” usually tells us what kind of assembly is being referred to. For example, in Matt. 18:17 Jesus is talking, **“And if he (referring to a brother who has trespassed against another brother) shall neglect to hear them (one or two witnesses), tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”** At this point in time the only assembly would have been in a synagogue or a local court. Acts 19 is where we find the word *ekklesia* translated “assembly” in verses 32, 39 and 41 and here it is referring to a local court.

There are a number of uses of the word “church” where a local assembly is being referred to, such as Acts 14:23 & 27, Romans 16:1, 4, 5, 16 and 23, I Cor. 1:2, 4:17 and many other references. The majority of times the word “church” is used, it is referring to a particular local assembly.

There are several references to the church or congregation at Jerusalem such as Acts 5:11, 8:1 & 3, 12:1 & 5. Also there were apparently congregations in Judea that had been started by the church at Jerusalem and often these are referred to as churches such as Acts 9:31, 11:22 & 26, Gal. 1:13 & 22.

In Acts 7:38 we find **“the church in the wilderness”** referring to the whole congregation of Israel as they traveled from Egypt to Canaan in Moses’ time. In Heb. 2:12, the writer of Hebrews is quoting Psa. 22:22, in which the word “congregation” in Psalms is “church” in Hebrews. Heb. 12:23 refers to **“the general assembly and church of the firstborn.”** To understand this, one has to understand the resurrections and the position of over-comers, subjects we will try to deal

with in future articles. But for now, let me just say that this is referring to the over-comers who have had part in the first resurrection. This leaves us with two other ways that the word “church” is used. It is important that we understand these as there has been considerable false teaching concerning these.

Let’s first look at Matt. 16:18 where Christ is talking to Peter and says, **“And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** As most of you know, it is this verse that Roman Catholicism claims as the basis of that church and their claim that Peter was the first pope.

But as I said earlier, we need the context to know what is actually being said here. So let us back up and put everything in context. Starting in verse 13 we read, **“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”** ¹⁴⁾ **And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.** ¹⁵⁾ **He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?** ¹⁶⁾ **And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** ¹⁷⁾ **And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”** Then follows vs 18 that we have already quoted. The Companion Bible gives a good word study in its notes on verse 18 that is worthy of study.

Referring to these notes let us see if we can understand this verse. **“And I say also”** would be rendered by most of us as **“I also say”** inferring that someone else has already made a statement, in this case He just said in verse 17 that His Father had revealed a truth (that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God). So Jesus is going to say something that is at least similar. Jesus then says **“That thou art Peter.”** The word Peter is from the Greek *petros*, meaning a stone (loose and movable). Apparently Jesus had given Peter this name when they first met (John

1:42). Jesus called him Cephas, which is Aramaic for Peter, which was actually a blessing, though I’m sure not recognized as such by Peter at the time. From then on Jesus always called him Simon, his birth name, except here and Luke 22:34.

Then Jesus continued, **“Upon this rock I will build my church.”** The word “this” is very emphatic, as though referring to Himself. A couple of examples of the use of the word in this context is John 2:19 (this temple) and 6:58 (this bread); in both cases He is referring to Himself. I believe in Matt. 16:18 then that the “rock” He is referring to is Himself, not Peter. This is confirmed also by the words “Peter” (*petros*) and “rock” (*petra*) in the original Greek. *Petra* refers to a large stone (immovable like a cliff) whereas *petros* refers to a small stone (moveable). Also *petros* is masculine gender in the Greek and *petra* is feminine gender. When a feminine noun is used as a simile of something else, the genders have to agree. *Petra* cannot be a simile for *petros* as the genders are different. The simile can be expressed or implied. In this case, since *petra* cannot refer to *petros*, the simile is implied. If we back up to verse 16, Peter’s confession (or *homologia* in Greek) that Jesus is **“the Christ”** is the implied simile and the Greek word for confession is *homologia* which is a feminine gender noun. So I think it is safe to say that rather than Peter being the “rock” upon which Jesus would build His church, it is the truth of **“Christ, the Son of the living God”** upon which He will build His church.

Paul, in I Cor. 3:10-11 says **“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.”**

Isaiah tells us in chapter 28:16 **“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”**

The psalmist, in Psa. 118:22 speaking of Christ, tells us, **“The stone which the builders**

refused to become the head stone of the corner.”

There are several references to Christ and His kingdom that compares Him to a stone or rock, enough that I believe we can see that Christ, in fulfillment of prophecy is the “rock” upon which Christ’s “church” or “congregation” was to be built, not a man such as Peter.

Up to the time Christ spoke these words, the only congregation, assembly, or “church” we have reference to is Israel, **“the church in the wilderness.”** This passage in Matt. 16 could refer to this congregation since we see from Hosea 1:10 that even though God has divorced Israel, He says that they would continue to grow in numbers and that **“it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living God.”** Also we know that Israel left their place of captivity and began migrating across Asia Minor, Europe and the British Isles under different names and that to a great extent these were the “Gentiles” whom Paul and the early missionaries found so receptive to the gospel. Paul refers to this in Rom. 9:24-26. Matt. 16:18 could also refer to the next type of assembly that we find the word “church” used in reference to though in reality this type we just discussed and the next type may well be one and the same.

But first let’s finish this verse 18. We are told that **“the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** The word “hell” is from the Greek *hades* which literally means “unseen” but is translated both “grave” and “hell.” I believe that Christ, in reference to the resurrection, is saying that the grave shall not have the power against the resurrection to retain its captives because Christ is the rock, the foundation of His congregation.

The next type of “church” that we want to look at is found discussed mostly in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Here we find all of the types we have looked at combined into a single entity. It is not an organized church such as we see today among all the denomination, some of which

claim to be the only true church. Rather, as Paul states in Eph. 1:23 referring to the church is the previous verse, **“Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”**

To help understand the church as the body of Christ is going to take quite a bit of discussion so this is where we want to begin our study next month. For now let’s understand that “church” as we normally think of it today as a building, an organized hierarchal structure, a denomination or even a service is not what the word “church” in our King James Bible refers to. As we will see as we further our study next month, being a part of the true church **“the body of Christ,”** does not require denominational membership, being in some grand edifice, or any of the other requirements that we as men impose on each other, but rather simply believing God and trusting on His Son Jesus Christ. **JRL**

LAND OF CANAAN

We began our look at the land of Canaan last month by looking at what it is today, for the most part the current Israeli state. It is important that we realize what the Bible has to say about this small piece of land to understand not only what happened during Bible times, but to better understand much of what is happening today in that area of our world.

The first reference to the land of Canaan is found in Gen. 11:31 where Terah, Abraham’s father, took Abram (Abraham) and Sarai, Abram’s wife, and his grandson Lot, and set out from Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land of Canaan. Terah never got there, but Abram, Sarai and Lot later traveled on to the land.

The name, “the land of Canaan,” came from the inhabitants of most of the land, all of whom were descendents of Canaan, son of Ham and grandson of Noah, (Gen. 10:6). Gen. 6:15-18 list the sons of Canaan which became the names of the various tribes of Canaanites, Sidon, Heth, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgasites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. At that time the Jordan River was the east boundary and the Mediterranean Sea was the west boundary. On the north were the Phoenicians whose land we know as Lebanon. On the south was Egypt though there was a

relatively small settlement of Philistines along the sea shore in the south end of the Gaza Strip on our map. In the 12th chapter of Genesis, God promised to give Abraham and his seed (descendents) the land of Canaan, (Gen12:7). In Gen. 15:18, God expanded this promise to include all the land east of the Jordan River unto the Euphrates River. However, as we read on in Genesis, the only part of this land that Abraham owned was a very small plot, called the field of Machpelah, for which he paid the sons of Heth four hundred shekels of silver to use as a burial place for his wife Sarah and later Abraham and others. It really wasn't until after the Israelites came out of Egypt back to the land of Canaan, that this promise of God to Abraham began to come to pass.

A theory that has always interested me from the time I first heard it concerns the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. You need to read the whole story in Gen 18 & 19. In Gen. 14 we are told **“And the vale Siddim was full of slimepits,...”** Siddim was the general area where Sodom and Gomorrah were located. The slime pits were actually pools of asphalt. We usually think of oil and asphalt being underground where it has to be pumped out, but here it was in pools on the surface of the ground. We're told in Gen. 19:28 after God rained brimstone and fire out of heaven on these cities that **“the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.”** The theory is that this brimstone and fire set these slime pits on fire, the burning of which started the depression we now know as the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea. If this theory is correct, this would account for the large mineral content of the sea. The water that runs into this Sea, because it is so far below sea level, cannot run out of the sea so is removed from the sea by evaporation only, which leaves the high mineral content still in the water. For this reason, no fish or plants can live in the Sea.

Though Isaac, Abraham's son, and Jacob and Esau, Isaac's sons, continued to live in the land until Jacob was an old man, they never really owned the land. Finally Jacob and all his family went into Egypt because of drought in the land of Canaan. Four hundred years later under the leadership of Moses and then Joshua, the descendents of Jacob, some three million strong, came out of Egypt back to the land of Canaan to claim it as their own, as per instructions from God. Moses sent spies ahead to see what the land was like. Two things stood out in their findings about the land. First, it was very fertile. As evidence of its fertility we're told in Numbers 13:23 that they cut a branch from a grape vine that had one cluster of grapes on it.

It was so heavy that they had to put a staff through it so that two men could carry it, one on each end of the staff.

Secondly, there were giants in the land. These giants were of the children of Anak, son of Arba, a son of Heth, a son of Canaan as you may remember. The giant that David killed with his slingshot was a descendent of these giants.

The Israelites feared the giants so much they refused to go into the land. As a result, God caused them to stay in the Sinai wilderness for 40 years until all the generation that refused to go had all died. Then Moses took the Israelites north on the east side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan River and then Joshua led them across the river into the land of Canaan. However the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh felt the land on the east side of the Jordan was more to their liking, so once all the tribes had land, these 2 1/2 tribes stayed on the east side. This land had been occupied by the Moabites and Ammorites (descendents of Lot), but God gave the Israelites this land as well as the west side of the river. God told Israel to completely destroy all of the Canaanites, but Israel did not do as God told them, so many Canaanites continued to live in the land, some even to this day. Joshua divided the land by lot among the Israelites plus making four main divisions.



The northern part was assigned to the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar; the middle part went to Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh; the southern part went to Benjamin, Dan, Judah and Simeon; and the east (east side of the Jordan) went to Reuben, Gad and the other half of Manasseh, as we have mentioned. In the time of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the ten tribes revolted leaving Judah and Benjamin to form the Kingdom of Judah while the ten tribes became the Kingdom of Israel and were also known as Ephraim.

However, in King David's time he actually extended the kingdom to the Euphrates River in accordance with the promise God gave to Abraham. However, this extended territory did not last too long, it appears.

Eventually, the people of the Kingdom of Israel became so disobedient to God that God caused the Assyrians, whose country lay north and east of Israel, to take the Israelites captive and move them out of the land of Canaan. These captured Israelites were moved farther east from Assyria and placed into the area between and south of the Black and Caspian Seas. Then the Assyrians brought in peoples from other countries to occupy the land of Israel to prevent the Israelites from returning.

Later the Kingdom of Judah was likewise taken captive by the King of Babylon and moved into the various countries that Babylon had conquered. 70 years later after Babylon had been conquered by the Persians, the king allowed all, who wanted, to return to Jerusalem and the area around it. Some went, but not near all. By the time of Christ, the people who now occupying the land of Canaan were a pretty varied group of people though the Kingdom of Judah still occupied Jerusalem and the area around it.

Idumea, or the Edomites, occupied the land south of Judea while Samaria was on its north side with

Galilee on further north. Judea conquered and absorbed Idumea. In Christ's time the King of Judea was an Edomite.

Many, or most of the Benjamites had apparently separated themselves from the Judahites, and had settled in Galilee. Most of the apostles were Galileans or Benjamites.

In 70 A.D. Roman armies destroyed the city of Jerusalem and killed a very great number of the inhabitants. Those left were forced to flee into many different countries. The majority of the people living in the land since have been Arabs, descendants of Ishmael, son of Abraham.

The name Palestine, which was the name of the land up until 1948 in modern history, was derived from the name of the Philistines.

The land, following the Babylonian captivity, fell first under the rule of the Persians (today's Iranians), then the Greeks, followed by the Romans. As the Roman Empire fell, the Turks took over the land and ruled it until it was taken by the British in 1917 and then given to the newly formed state of Israel in 1948.

Since very few of the people we call Jews today are actually descended from Jacob-Israel and since the promise that God made to Abraham was passed down to Isaac and Jacob, rather than to Ishmael or Esau, the full realization of this promise is yet to happen. While God made provision for the very great growth in numbers of the Israel people in His promise to King David (II Sam. 7:10), it will be interesting to see how God brings about His promise to Abraham, and what the full significance this small piece of land will ultimately play in world history. As it is today, it appears to have always been a point of attention and contention to the whole world. **JRL**