

The Abrahamic Covenant

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All admit the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant in understanding biblical revelation, but not all agree on its interpretation. Genesis 12 is a pivotal statement of the covenant because it contains God's first recorded speech to Abraham. There God promises to make Abraham a great nation, to bless him, and to make his name great. Genesis 15 makes clear that the LORD took upon Himself alone the responsibility for fulfilling the covenant. Genesis 17 adds the revelation that the covenant would be everlasting. Genesis 18 and 22 restate terms of the covenant in connection with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the offering of Abraham's son Isaac. Exodus through Deuteronomy describe the initial outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant. The elements of the covenant are threefold: making Abraham into a great nation, blessing Abraham personally, and blessing all nations in Abraham. The promises of the covenant are unconditional. The rest of the OT repeatedly refers back to God's oath to Abraham in the Torah. The NT does the same by pointing out that Jesus Christ, Abraham's seed, will make possible the final fulfillment of that covenant in the future.

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The importance of the Abrahamic Covenant for a proper understanding of the whole Bible is widely accepted. For example, dispensationalist John F. Walvoord writes,

It is recognized by all serious students of the Bible that the covenant with Abraham is one of the important and determinative revelations of Scripture. It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament and reaches for its fulfillment into the New. In the controversy between premillenarians and amillenarians, the interpretation of this covenant more or less settles the entire argument. The analysis of its provisions and the character of their fulfillment set the mold for the entire body of Scriptural truth.¹

Covenantalist John Murray also emphasizes the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant when he states,

MSJ 10:2 (Fall 99) p. 192

It is this Abrahamic covenant, so explicitly set forth in Gn. xv and xvii, that underlies the whole subsequent development of God's redemptive promise, word, and action.... The redemptive grace of God in the highest and furthest reaches of its realization is the unfolding of the promise given to Abraham and therefore the unfolding of the Abrahamic covenant....

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