

Ryrie's Five Points of Literal Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant Supports Premillennialism

**By
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Eschatologically, the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) is the foundation from which springs the other great unconditional Biblical covenants, which are the Palestinian (Deut. 30:1-10), Davidic (2 Sam. 7:10-16), and New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-40). If parts of the Abrahamic Covenant or those springing from it have been *literally* fulfilled, then it can be reasoned that one should expect *complete literal* fulfillment of not only the Abrahamic Covenant, but also the other three.

A student of God's words must understand that there are unconditional as well as conditional covenants. The Mosaic (Sinai) Covenant (Ex. 19-24) is a conditional covenant, which is dependant on the recipients response to the conditions offered. It is a covenant containing an "if clause;" that is: if the recipient does certain 'things,' then the one making the covenant does certain 'things.' Some have tried to argue that the unconditional covenants are really conditional. However, there are blessings that

"grow out of the original covenant, but these conditioned blessings do not change the unconditional character of that covenant."¹

In other words, if a covenant or testament of a progenitor leaves an inheritance, such as a home for a progeny, which does not have a clause for "good behavior," the home is bequeathed to the individual without regard to behavior whether good or bad. However, if the individual maintains the home for the duration of a long term illness of the progenitor, which is "good behavior," then he stands to receive increased sales value,

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come, A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Academie Books, Grand Rapids, MI, First Printing, 1964, 1993 printing) 68.

which is a blessing. The ‘covenant’ was unconditional (e.g. inheritance of the house), but blessings grew out of the original covenant secondary to responsible behavior.

All of the *unconditional* covenants are called eternal by the Scriptures.² Therefore, the student of God’s words should expect the fulfillment of the tenets of the covenant. If it can be shown that a literal *partial* fulfillment of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant³ has occurred, then one should expect a literal *complete* eschatological fulfillment in the future.

The next question that is broached concerns the timing of the fulfillment.

“From these considerations it must be acknowledged that the premillennial position rests upon many varied and weighty arguments.”⁴

It is at this point that the exact wording of the Abrahamic Covenant is important. The wording assures Israel of three promises that can be expected; they are: (1) a land, (2) a nation, and (3) a blessing(s).

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto **a land** that I will shew thee: 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 families of the earth be blessed**. Genesis 12:1-3

It is significant that only God walked between the animals sacrificed upon ratification of the covenant.

“The significance of that is striking: it means that God swore fidelity to His promises and placed the obligation of their fulfillment on Himself alone.”⁵ (Gen. 15:9-17)

All families of the earth have been blessed by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ: for all who will believe in Jesus Christ by His gospel through faith among the nations of

² Ibid. 69 (Pentecost).

³ Ibid. 75 (Pentecost). Pentecost quotes Walvoord’s ten reasons for believing the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional. These are excellent!

⁴ Ibid. 76 (Pentecost).

⁵ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1999) 528

the earth are set apart with spiritual blessings and eternal life (Galatians 3). If the fulfillment of the unconditional covenant, particularly the blessings, was abrogated, then (1) Christ would not have come, (2) there would be no assurance of salvation and eternal life, and (3) spiritual blessings would not have been received. Since these things have occurred based upon Paul's explanation in Galatians three, then partial fulfillment has occurred. If the Abrahamic Covenant had been conditional, then no part of it would have been fulfilled at a later date because of disobedience by the nation. For example, the "seed" promise (Gen. 13:15-16, 15:18) would not have been fulfilled in David and Solomon because of the "evil" and disobedience by Israel during the time of the Judges.

The untenable conclusions of most amillennialists and postmillennialists that Israel is not Israel is surprising. Oswald T. Allis says:

"Carrying to an almost unprecedented extreme that literalism which is characteristic of Millenarianism, they insist that Israel must mean Israel, and that the kingdom promises in the Old Testament concern Israel and are to be fulfilled to Israel literally."⁶

This is unreasonable. In addition, amillennialism

"teaches that all the provisions of the covenant have been fulfilled, including the land promise. This is done either by spiritualizing the land promise so that the church fulfills it, or by seeing it fulfilled in Israel's past history."⁷

Many amillennialists and postmillennialists deny the promises to the physical "seed," which are the promises of a land and a nation, as well as the blessings to the "spiritual seed" found among "all the families of the earth," the church (Gal. 3). Many of them also proclaim that the covenant promises have already been fulfilled (e.g. the land promises based on 1 Kings 4:21, 24 and the ashes of Abraham in the land). However, the

⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, *op. cit.*, 86

⁷ Charles C. Ryrie, *op. cit.*, 529

land was an eternal grant, and it has *not* been realized by the ridiculous claim that Abraham's ashes rest there.⁸

"This Abrahamic covenant, which contained individual promises to Abraham, promises of the preservation of a nation, and the possession of a land by that nation, was given to a specific covenant people. Since it was unconditional and eternal, and has never yet been fulfilled, it must await future fulfillment, Israel must be preserved as a nation, must inherit her land, and be blessed with spiritual blessings to make this inheritance possible."⁹

Charles Ryrie said:

"The unconditionality of the Abrahamic Covenant furnishes an important support for premillennialism, since the land promise needs a future time (the Millennium) in which it will be fulfilled. Therefore, amillennialist allege that there were in fact conditions attached to the fulfillment of the covenant that make it impossible to view the covenant as unconditional."¹⁰

Premillennialism is the only proposition that fulfills the requirements of a literal interpretation of Scripture because of the partial fulfillment of the promises mentioned above. Ryrie has outlined in detail five literal partial fulfillments of the covenant. They are:

(1) In fulfillment of the personal promises, Abraham was specially blessed of God. Lincoln has pointed out:

"a. Abraham was blessed personally in temporal things: (1) he had land (Gen. 13:14, 15, 17); (2) He had servants (Gen. 15:7, etc.) (3) He had much cattle, silver, and gold (Gen. 13:2, 24:34, 35).

"b. Abraham was blessed personally in spiritual matters: (1) He had a happy life of separation unto God, (Gen. 13:8; 14:22, 23); (2) He enjoyed a precious life of communion with God, (Gen. 13:18); (3) He had a consistent life of prayer, (Gen. 28:23-33); (4) He was sustained of God constantly, (Gen. 21:22); (5) He possessed the peace and confidence that comes from an obedient life, (Gen. 22:5, 8, 10, 12, 16-18)."

(2) He had a great name...

(3) He was a channel of divine blessing to others, for he not only blessed his household, his posterity, but the world at large through the Bible, the Saviour, and the gospel.

(4) History has borne out the fact that nations which have persecuted Israel, even when that very persecution was in fulfillment of God's discipline, have been punished

⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., 82.

⁹ J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., 93.

¹⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, op. cit. 528

for dealing with Abraham's seed. This has been true in both blessings and cursing in the case of the slaughter of the kings (Gen. 14:12-16); in the case of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20); in the case of Abimelech (Gen. 20:2-18; 21:22-34; in the case of Heth (Gen. 23:1-20); and in other experiences in Israel's history (Deut. 30:7; Isa. 14:1-2; Joel 3:1-8; Matt. 25:40-45).

(5) Abraham did have an heir by Sarah (Gen. 21:2...

Denial that these aforementioned promises have been fulfilled is puerile."¹¹

It has also been demonstrated that part of the David Covenant has been fulfilled; and the

"partial fulfillment determines the method to be used in the unfulfilled portions."¹²

The New Covenant's fulfillment is perplexing to many expositors. This is the question: "Does it await fulfillment by Israel or has there been an indication of fulfillment by some "branches?" It cannot be denied that the Gentiles have received literally the blessings of the New Covenant.

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Galatians 3:14

Gentiles are the wild olive "branches" grafted into the blessings.

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Romans 11:17

Praise God for His mercy and grace toward those who believe in Christ by faith, which reveals His intention to literally and completely fulfill the New Covenant promises to Israel when the Saviour returns. The grafted in Gentiles are a taste of the blessings of the New Covenant. The spiritual fulfillment of the New Covenant by grafting Gentiles into the blessings demonstrates the future complete fulfillment of Truth revealed.

The Palestinian Covenant has *not* been partially fulfilled, but based upon the literal fulfillment of three of its related unconditional covenants, we can expect complete

¹¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., 83.

¹² Ibid. 107 (Pentecost).

fulfillment of it also. Surely, the reinstatement of Israel as a state on May, 15, 1947 in Palestine and the return of the Jewish people to the land is in preparation for the complete fulfillment of this covenant. It is a premillennial proposition that awaits the return of our Prophet, Priest, and King that is surely on the horizon, when it will be fulfilled completely.

“If these conclusions reached after careful examination of the Scriptural revelations are sound and reasonable, it follows that premillennialism is the only satisfactory system of doctrine that harmonizes with the Abrahamic Covenant.”¹³

AMEN!

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¹³ Ibid. 94 (Pentecost).