

Chapter Thirty-four
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
God's Eternal Promise Came Through Faith (not Law)

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: ¹⁵ Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:13-17).

In verse 13, we see the full scope of God's covenant promise to Abraham. That promise goes far beyond the small piece of real estate in the Mesopotamian Valley called Israel. Abraham (and his "seed") was promised "the world." There are two points of doctrine necessary to understanding what God is referring to here. First, what "world" would Abraham and his "seed" inherit. Second, who are the "seed"? Only when we understand these two Bible truths will we be able to see that they take us far beyond the scope of this temporal world. These promises are eternal, not temporal.

Although the land of Canaan was a defined piece of real estate, it is only typical of the eternal Promised Land. It is clear from Scripture that Abraham understood this from the very beginning.

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. ⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God" (Hebrews 11:8-10).

Abraham lived in the land of Canaan, but did not establish a permanent dwelling place anywhere in that land. Abraham "sojourned in the land of promise" living in tents. The word "sojourned" is from the Greek word *paroikeo* (par-oy-keh'-o) and means to dwell in a place as a stranger.

Why did Abraham continue to live in a tent all of his life? Hebrews 11:10 tells us why. He never found what he was looking for. He couldn't find it because it had not been created yet. The important point is that throughout his whole life, he never stopped searching for the "city . . . whose builder and maker is God." Abraham's faith in God's promise kept him looking for that "city" all of his life. It is apparent from Scripture that Abraham taught his descendants about this "city." They too continued the search of faith for the promised "city . . . whose builder and maker is God."

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:13-16).

What is the "city" Abraham's hands of faith continued to reach out for? It was the heavenly Jerusalem and the new heaven/earth ("and calleth those things which be not as though they were," Romans 4:17). This vision was brought forward into the New Covenant as well. It is clear that early New Testament churches looked in faith to the same heavenly vision of Abraham and these people, saved by faith from all nations of the world, were a fulfillment of God's covenant promise to make Abraham "the father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4, i.e. races of saved people).

1. The Apostle Peter taught this truth.

“¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ¹¹ Seeing then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, ¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. ¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (II Peter 3:10-14).

2. The Apostle Paul taught this truth.

“²² But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel. ²⁵ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: ²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. ²⁷ And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:22-29).

“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13:14).

3. The Apostle John taught this truth.

“¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ² And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. ⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. ⁵ And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful” (Revelation 21:1-5).

The Greek word translated “new” in Revelation 21:1 is the word *kainos* (kahee-nos'). When used of things pertaining to substance, the word means of a new kind, unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of. The “new heaven” and “new earth” will not be a make over of the old. They will be completely different; of a new kind. Some of these differences are detailed in Revelation 21:9-27.

Every person who calls upon the Name of the Lord Jesus in faith, trusting in the finished work of the Cross of Calvary is of the “seed” of Abraham who is the “father of us all” (Romans 4:16). Therefore, faith is the vehicle to become an heir of the promise of God, not by doing the works of the Law (Romans 4:13-14). This person of faith will receive (as part of his inheritance in Jesus Christ) a place in the “Father’s house” (see John 14:2 below). The “Father’s house” is the new heaven/earth.

“¹ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

The whole thrust of the epistle to the Galatians is that this inheritance belongs to the believer by faith in the finished work of Christ and not in any way by participating in the works of some religious ritual or because of moral restraint on the believer’s part.

“³ Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:3-4).

“¹¹ But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. ¹² For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? ¹⁵ We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:11-16).

“²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:20-21).

“⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. ⁷ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹² And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. ¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: ¹⁴ 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 3:6-14).

The point is clearly made. The believer’s inheritance of the new heaven/earth is not due to his keeping some religious rituals, doing good deeds, or by being baptized into some religious organization. Christianity is not about religion. Christianity is about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The foundation of that relationship is faith (not works). Abraham was justified by faith before he did what God told him to do. Yes, he did what God told him to do, but he was not justified by doing that. He was justified the moment he believed God. At that moment (salvation is an event, not a process), his faith was immediately and eternally counted for righteousness.

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1. What two points of doctrine are necessary in order to understand what God is referring to in Romans 4:13 regarding the “world” and the “seed”?
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

2. What is the land of Canaan typical of? _____

3. What is the meaning of the word “sojourned” from the Greek word *paroikeo* (par-oy-keh'-o). In Hebrews 11:9? _____

4. Why did Abraham continue to live in tents all of his life? _____

5. Read Hebrews 11:13-16. How do we know Abraham transferred his vision to future generations? _____

6. What is the “city” Abraham’s hands of faith continued to reach out for? _____

7. Read the following Scriptures and discuss why it is clear that early New Testament churches looked in faith to the same heavenly vision of Abraham.
 - A. II Peter 3:10-14 _____

 - B. Hebrews 12:22-29 and 13:14 _____

 - C. Revelation 21:1-5 _____

- 8 Read Romans 4:16. What does God mean when He says Abraham is the “father of us all”? _____

9. Read John 14:1-3. What does the “Father’s house” refer to in the context of this lesson? _____

10. Discuss the meaning of the following Scriptures from the epistle to the Galatians regarding the fact that faith is the only vehicle to become an heir of the promise of God to Abraham.
 - A. Galatians 1:3-4 _____
 - B. Galatians 2:11-16 _____
 - C. Galatians 2:20-21 _____
 - D. Galatians 3:6-14 _____