

Wayne T. Galloway
www.fortloganchurchofchrist.com

The Promised Land

Watch the video Ep. 4 The Holy Land by John A. Beck prior to this study.
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPOUA7GLxXIGkhikntfiT4ida1IKbSNNB>

Opening:

1. Land. There is some sense in which it gives security. In the worst of times land means that you always have a place to go.
2. My dad lived through the economic depression in the United States. He watched his father's farm sell at the courthouse steps when my grandfather could not pay the taxes.
3. Anticipating his own death, my dad stressed to my mother to never sell her home. In her older years, as she came to face the fact she could no longer live alone, she hesitated to sell her home and make the changes life forced her to make.
4. Her words to me, "But your dad said to never sell your home."

Discussion:

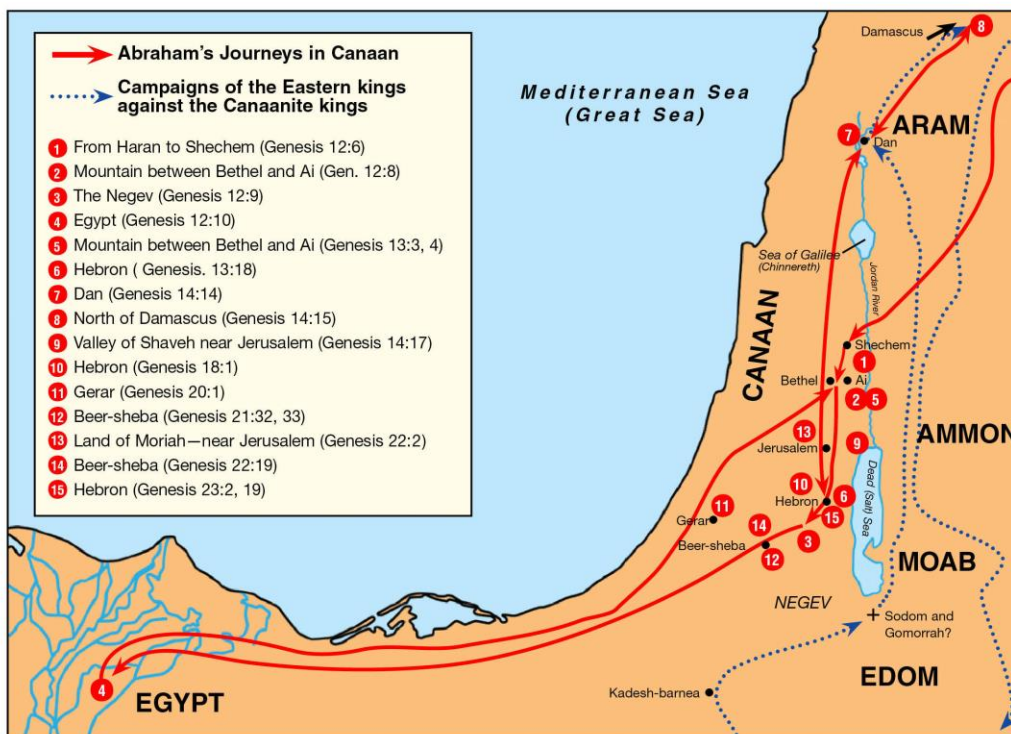
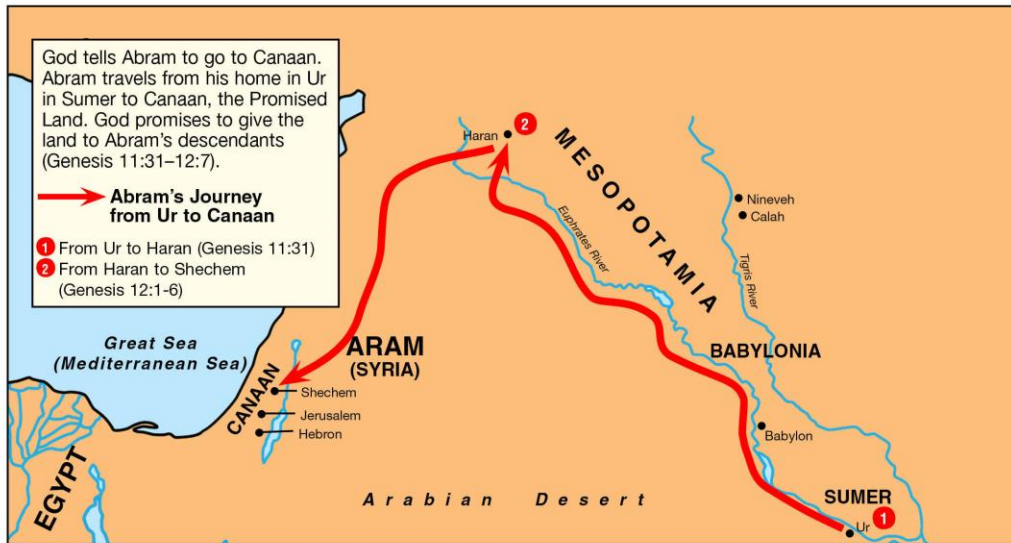
1. The Lord promised Abraham a land, a place to be, a place of security and belonging for him and his descendants. God said,

"Go forth from your country and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

2. Three things God promised Abraham.
 - a. Land.
 - b. To make him a great nation.
 - c. In him all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Land is the first element of the promise. Land would provide a place to be, a way to make a living, and security.

3. But Abraham lived a nomadic lifestyle. The Book of Genesis describes how he moved from place to place. He moved from Ur of the Chaldeans under the instruction of God. He went to Haran, and then set out for the land of Canaan. He went to Egypt to escape from famine. He then moved back to Canaan, but moved around from place to place. The following map depicts his movements.



4. In the New Testament, Stephen made this observation.

“The God of glory appeared to father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’ Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in

which you are now living. But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground" (Acts 7:2-5).

Hear Stephen's emphasis. Abraham had "not even a foot of ground!"

5. When Sarah died at 127 years old Abraham lived among the sons of Heth. He did not even have a burial site for Sarah. He said to the sons of Heth, "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you so that I may bury my dead" (Gen. 23:4). Ephron the Hittite sold him the cave of Machpelah for 400 shekels of silver (Gen. 23).

"But I thought God promised to give him a land," you object. He did. "But Abraham has no land," you object again. Exactly! As a matter of fact when Abraham died at age 175 he was buried on that same piece of land that Sarah was buried on (Gen. 25:7-10). Abraham's "grand land holdings" was limited to one field. Do you see why Stephen said he had, "not even a foot of ground?" Now we Westerners think, "He did not even have 12 inches of ground." Well, the idea is that he did not have a place to set his foot.

6. Things did not look promising for Abraham's son Isaac either. He lived a nomadic life in Canaan like Abraham had. When a famine occurred he attached himself to Abimelech king of the Philistines. God said, "Stay in the land, do not go to Egypt. Sojourn in the land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham" (Gen. 26:1-3).

7. Isaac's son Jacob received the same promise from God. "The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you" (Gen. 35:12). But things were not looking so good for Jacob and his descendants when they had to move to Egypt to survive the next famine in Canaan. God had sent Joseph ahead of them to make preparations for their survival, but what about the land? Not a foot of ground!!

8. Not a foot of ground, but they are hopeful. When Joseph was about to die he made the sons of Israel promise to take his bones back to Canaan (Gen. 50:22-26).

9. Not until the days of Moses and Joshua did the people leave Egypt and go into the land of Canaan. Joshua 21:43-45 says,

"So the Lord gave Israel all the land which he had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass."

10. So the promise of land made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was realized in their descendants. Their later history reveals how they became unfaithful and were exiled to Babylon. Under the leadership of individuals like Ezra and Nehemiah they returned from captivity. Matthew summarizes the history. "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations" (Matt. 1:17).

11. So biblical history reveals that God did fulfill His promise to Abraham.

12. But that is not the end of the story. The writers of the New Testament see something more. Hebrews 11:8-16, while reflecting on the promises made to Abraham says, "By faith Abraham lived as an alien in a land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise."

The writer adds, "He was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." He says, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, they make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them."

"Do you mean to say that the land of Canaan that Abraham's descendants received was not the promised land?" Oh, it was the promised land (note Heb. 11:9), but they were looking for more. They were looking for a heavenly country (Heb. 11:16). Sometimes we are so near-sighted that we miss the vision that God wants us to see. Or maybe we are looking back over our shoulder at the shadow when the reality is in front of us.

Application:

1. What is the role of faith in the promise made to Abraham? As you reflect on the promise made to Abraham do you think you would have been as sure of the fulfillment as he was?
2. As you look toward the heavenly country promised to you describe your excitement. How does it motivate you to share your vision with others? What do you imagine the heavenly country is like?
3. How does it help you endure the struggles of this life? (See Heb. 11:32ff; 12:1ff).
4. What does it mean to you to be a stranger and exile on the earth (Heb. 11:13)? How does this relate to laying up treasures? See Matt. 6:19-21.