

Obtaining the Inheritance: The Big Story

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It was a starry night when God told Abram, soon to be Abraham, that he would have as many descendants as the stars of the sky. On that same night He told him that the land he was on would be his also.

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it. (Gen 15:7)

Obtaining the possession, according to God's further revelation to Abram, would not be immediate. His family would dwell in another land and be oppressed for 400 years, then, his fourth generation would possess the land. God then described its boundaries.

It was this "promised land" that has been the focus of so much warfare and turmoil in the world. Actually, three major religions have a claim here: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

God fulfilled this promise and brought the sons of Israel in, under the leadership of Joshua, as the book by his name describes.



The idea of inheritance fills the Bible, so much so that you may wish to say it is the whole story. It starts with Adam in the perfect state in the Garden of Eden, then transitions to his tragic loss of Eden, to the promised inheritance for the Jews in Canaan, through the Babylonian exile from the land and the return, and finally, in Christ, to the final inheritance of the believers on the new earth.

This is the reason that the word "blessing" shows up so often—the Christian life is all about blessing realized in Christ, promised first to Abraham. The land is part of that blessing. Abraham was told that the blessing would come through the Seed. We find in the unfolding drama of the Bible that this Seed is Christ, and all who are related to him, Jew or Gentile, receive the blessing. "You were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing," Peter said (1 Peter 3:9). We are the true sons of Abraham, blessed forever. And the inheritance isn't a piece of real estate in the Middle East. No, much more than that.

Jesus showed us that the inheritance for the believer in Christ at least includes the entire world. Describing every believer, He said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Mt 5:5). Amazing!

Interestingly, the writer of Hebrews says that to Abraham and his first descendants, the promised land seemed to not actually be the inheritance they longed for after all:

Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own But as it is, 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. (Heb. 11:12-16)

So the real inheritance includes a heavenly city. John said that this city, the New Jerusalem now in heaven, will come down to earth one day. The heavenly city will be in the physical centerpiece of the new earth God will provide after he judges the old earth and destroys it (see Rev 21).

The Bible states, in fact, that we have been made fellow-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). The inheritance for the believer will not only cover the new earth and the New Jerusalem, but the entire universe of created things over which Christ rules. We will rule and reign with Him in whatever ways He directs (Rom 8:17).

The Spirit Also

Paul makes clear that the Holy Spirit is the downpayment of this future blessing.

. . . the Holy Spirit, who is given as a pledge [earnest, or down payment] of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:13)

So, when we see the word, "blessing," the Bible writers often have an eye both on the Spirit and the future inheritance. Sometimes it speaks of what the Spirit provides as the "Blesser" of believers, the first installment of the final and eternal blessing. This gift of the Spirit shows us how immense the final inheritance actually is—a huge down payment for a huge inheritance.

Peter said, when talking of such things to persecuted people, "Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation [final unveiling] of Christ" (1 Pet 1:13). Good advice for blessed people.

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