

**PROMISE 2:  
NATIONHOOD**

The promises to Abraham are very rich and full. It will take the whole of world-history for them to be worked out and fulfilled. Abram was promised **multiplication into nationhood**. All believers are a 'great' nation; great in their worldwide extent, great in their spiritual character, great in their agreed way of godly living.

• *Israel descended from Abraham*

The promise was fulfilled in more than one way. A number of nations traced their descent to Abram. The Israelites, the twelve Ishmaelite tribes <sup>☞1</sup> and the Edomites could all trace their ancestry to Abram. But Israel supremely is regarded in the Old Testament as the nation descending from Abram. God multiplied Abram until his people became a nation.

☞1 17:20;  
18:18; 21:18;  
25:13–16

• *A spiritual nation also*

But the promise is true at another level. A spiritual nation came into being also, consisting of all those who like Abram had put their trust in the seed of Abram, Jesus. Paul argues in Romans 4 that Abraham is the father of believing Gentiles as well as of Jews.

• *Multiplication – numbers do matter!*

Multiplication is part of the promise to Christians who persist in faith. It is a mistake to think that 'numbers do not matter'. Numbers do matter. On the day of Pentecost when thousands were being saved, someone was counting <sup>☞1</sup>! It was being added to each day <sup>☞2</sup>, and soon '*the number of the men were about five thousand*' <sup>☞3</sup>. The numerical growth was a vital concern. Where there is diligent faith, where there is a true walking in the Spirit, we can expect to see the people of Abraham, true believers, being multiplied. This promise, like other parts of the promise to Abraham, also relates to the Christian. The Christian is intended to influence others. The follower of Jesus is a 'fisher of people'. He will attract others to be like him, and thus he will multiply himself. An ever-increasing spiritual nation is coming into being under the kingship of Jesus. God is still giving Abraham spiritual children.

☞1 Acts 2:41  
☞2 Acts 2:47  
☞3 Acts 4:4

**PROMISE 3:  
PERSONAL  
BLESSING**

Abram was also promised **personal blessing**. '*And I will bless you*', said God. There would be a spiritual and a material side to the blessing. On the one side, it would include for Abram such things as long life, wealth, peace, good harvests, plenty of children. For Abram, these tangible blessings would be the indication that God was giving him favour and was with him. Spiritually it involved a place in God's plan for the world, a ministry to God's people, access into the mind of God, spiritual understanding, and the peace and joy that flows from being in the will of God.

• *Both spiritual and material*

• *Before Pentecost – material blessing emphasised*

The material side of God's 'blessing' was emphasized before Pentecost, for God's people were an earthly, political, nation. Even at that time however, the promise of material blessing always was a rough generalisation. The book of Job made the point that there could be exceptions to the rule. Under the New Covenant the emphasis changes and 'blessing' is not so much earthly wealth as '*all spiritual blessings*' <sup>☞1</sup>. The phrase '*all spiritual blessings*' in Ephesians 1:3 is expounded in Ephesians 1:4–14, and the emphasis is not purely material or financial. ('Prosperity' teachers have to use the Old Testament and the Mosaic law to get across their teaching. Apart from a few favourite verses there is not much in the epistles that they can use.) 'Blessing' still includes the provision of all needs (see Philippians 4:19 which has been talking about

☞1 Ephesians  
1:3

money, Philippians 4:18). Yet the emphasis for the modern Christian is not to be so heavily wealth-centred.

**PROMISE 4: A GREAT NAME**

• A good name gives significance

Abram was also promised a **great name**. Men and women generally wish to get a good name, and then they wish to maintain it. The thought of being totally nameless, totally ignored, totally insignificant to others is unbearably painful. In Genesis 3:20 Adam gave his wife a name, and in doing so he gave her significance. It meant that he was paying her attention, taking notice of her, and was seeing her place in the kingdom of God. In Genesis 4:17 Enoch, son of Cain, names a city after his own son. It was a means of being known for a long time and being treated as a notable person. In the third rebellion of the human race (after the first in Eden, and the second just before the flood) the troublemakers say ‘*Let us get ourselves a name*’ <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 11:4

• A gift of grace

What men and women wish to get by ways of wickedness and self-confidence, God wishes to give them by grace – beginning with Abram! A great name!

• Jesus of Nazareth given a name above every name!

It was the same with Jesus. When He was on planet earth He was disparagingly called ‘Jesus of Nazareth’. ‘*He shall be called a Nazarene*’ <sup>1</sup>. ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ is what they called Him when He was hanging on the cross <sup>2</sup>. But by His obedience He was highly exalted and ‘given a name’ that was above every name, so that at the name of Jesus – the despised name that His enemies used – every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! God gave Him a name <sup>3</sup>!

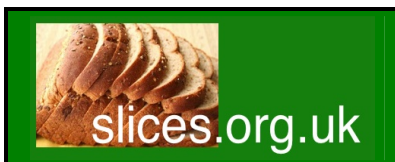
<sup>1</sup> Matthew 2:23  
<sup>2</sup> John 18:5  
<sup>3</sup> Philippians 2:5–11

• Christians’ names are recorded in the lamb’s book of life

It is the same with Christians. By God’s choice our names are in the book of life before the foundation of the world. When we are converted we are in the same position as Abraham; there is the possibility that we shall be ‘given a name’. If we overcome, Jesus will ‘confess our name’ before the Father <sup>1</sup>. Just as God glorifies His name, He will to a lesser extent glorify our name! An honoured position of recognition and authority is part of God’s inheritance offered to Abraham and offered to us who are Abraham’s children.

<sup>1</sup> Revelation 3:5

• Overcomers’ names are confessed by Jesus before the Father



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