

# Romans 9:6-8 Commentary

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**Romans 9:6** But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

**Greek:** [Ouch hoion de hoti ekseptoken \(3SRPI\) o logos tou theou. ou gar pantes oi ex Israel, houtoi Israel:](#)

**Amplified:** However, it is not as though God's Word had failed [coming to nothing]. For it is not everybody who is a descendant of Jacob (Israel) who belongs to [the true] Israel.

**ESV:** But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

**ICB:** I do not mean that God failed to keep his promise to them. But only some of the people of Israel are truly God's people.

**NKJV:** But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,

**NIV:** It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

**NLT:** Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to the Jews? No, for not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew!

**Philips:** Now this does not mean that God's word to Israel has failed. For you cannot count all "Israelites" as the true Israel of God (see discussion of Israel of God)

**Wuest:** But the case is not such as this, that the word of God is fallen powerless; for not all who are out of Israel, these are Israel,

**Young's Literal:** And it is not possible that the word of God hath failed; for not all who are of Israel are these Israel;

<b>ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS</b>				
<b>Romans 1:18-3:20</b>	<b>Romans 3:21-5:21</b>	<b>Romans 6:1-8:39</b>	<b>Romans 9:1-11:36</b>	<b>Romans 12:1-16:27</b>
<b>SIN</b>	<b>SALVATION</b>	<b>SANCTIFICATION</b>	<b>SOVEREIGNTY</b>	<b>SERVICE</b>
<b>NEED FOR SALVATION</b>	<b>WAY OF SALVATION</b>	<b>LIFE OF SALVATION</b>	<b>SCOPE OF SALVATION</b>	<b>SERVICE OF SALVATION</b>
<b>God's Holiness In Condemning Sin</b>	<b>God's Grace In Justifying Sinners</b>	<b>God's Power In Sanctifying Believers</b>	<b>God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile</b>	<b>Gods Glory The Object of Service</b>
<b>Deadliness of Sin</b>	<b>Design of Grace</b>	<b>Demonstration of Salvation</b>		
		<b>Power Given</b>	<b>Promises Fulfilled</b>	<b>Paths Pursued</b>
<b>Righteousness Needed</b>	<b>Righteousness Credited</b>	<b>Righteousness Demonstrated</b>	<b>Righteousness Restored to Israel</b>	<b>Righteousness Applied</b>
<b>God's Righteousness IN LAW</b>	<b>God's Righteousness IMPUTED</b>	<b>God's Righteousness OBEYED</b>	<b>God's Righteousness IN ELECTION</b>	<b>God's Righteousness DISPLAYED</b>
<b>Slaves to Sin</b>	<b>Slaves to God</b>			<b>Slaves Serving God</b>
<b>Doctrine</b>				<b>Duty</b>
<b>Life by Faith</b>				<b>Service by Faith</b>
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " <a href="#">Jensen's Survey of the NT</a> "				

<b>Summary of Romans 9-11</b>		
<b>Romans 9</b>	<b>Romans 10</b>	<b>Romans 11</b>
<b>Past Election</b>	<b>Present Rejection</b>	<b>Future Reception</b>
God's Sovereignty Israel's Election by God	Man's responsibility Israel's Rejection of God	God's Ways Higher God Not Rejecting Israel

**Related resources...**

- Summary on the Attributes of God
- Spurgeon on the Attributes of God
- Israel of God - Is God "Finished" with Israel in His prophetic plan?
- [Off Site - Table Comparing/contrasting Israel & Church](#)
- [Off Site - Does the Church Fulfill Israel's Program? - John Walvoord](#)

**Are you confused about God's plan for Israel?** Then I highly recommend Tony Garland's 12 Hour Course on **Romans 9-11** in which he addresses in depth the question of What Will Happen to Israel? (click) or see the individual lectures below)

- [Romans 9:1-5 Paul's Sorrow Concerning Israel](#)
- [Romans 9:6-13 Children of the Promise](#)
- [Romans 9:14-24 The Potter and the Clay](#)
- [Romans 9:25-33 A Remnant Will be Saved](#)
- [Romans 10:1-13 The Righteousness of God](#)
- [Romans 10:14-21 Has Israel Not Heard?](#)
- [Romans 11:1-6 God Has Not Cast Away The Jews](#)
- [Romans 11:7-15 Life from the Dead](#)
- [Romans 11:16-24 Two Olive Trees](#)
- [Romans 11:25-36 The Salvation of Israel](#)

Note that when you click the preceding links, each link will in turn give you several choices including an **Mp3 message** and brief transcript notes. The Mp3's are long (avg 70+ min) but are in depth and thoroughly Scriptural with many quotations from the Old Testament, which is often much less well understood than the NT by many in the church today. Tony Garland takes a **literal approach** to Scripture, and his love for the Jews and passion to see them saved comes through very clearly in these 12 hours of teaching! Take your home Bible Study group through this series if you dare! Take notes on the tapes as the transcripts are a very abbreviated version of the audio messages. **This course is highly recommended for all who love Israel!** I think you will agree that Tony Garland, despite coming to faith after age 30 as an engineer, clearly has been given a special anointing by God to proclaim the truth concerning Israel and God's glorious future plan for the Jews. Garland has also produced more than 20 hours of superb audio teaching in his verse by verse commentary on the [Revelation](#) (in depth transcripts also available) which will unravel (in a way you did not think was possible considering the plethora of divergent interpretations) God's final message of the triumph and return of the our Lord Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords! Maranatha!

**John MacArthur** introduces this section...

While the major theme of chapters 9–11 is God's dealing with His elect nation, the underlying theme, especially of chapter 9, is God's sovereignty in doing so. It demands more than a superficial understanding. And yet, when the deepest meaning and implications of this passage are carefully considered, especially its unambiguous declaration of God's absolute and unrestricted sovereign power, even the most devoted believer is left with some profound mysteries... In the minds of most Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day, Christianity, as it soon came to be called (see Acts 11:26), was nothing less than a heretical movement that attempted to abrogate God's ancient covenant and promises given through Abraham and reiterated to the other patriarchs as well as the covenant and law that He gave through Moses and to David. Most Jews, therefore, considered Christianity to be the total denigration of God's integrity and faithfulness. Because the Judaism of his day was so deeply steeped in the legalistic works righteousness of rabbinical traditions, and because God's plan to offer salvation on equal terms to Gentiles was a mystery not fully revealed in the Old Testament, Paul devotes chapters 9–11 of Romans to clarifying the place of Israel in the present church age.

As the apostle explained to the church at Ephesus, "By revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Eph. 3:4–6)

In Romans 9:6–33 Paul gives four basic reasons why the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not blasphemous heresy and in particular why its rejection by most individual Jews and by Israel as a nation does not impugn God's righteous and just character, does not vitiate His revelation given in the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament), does not alter the means of salvation, and does not relinquish the place of Israel in His ultimate plan of redemption. **First**, Paul declares that the unbelief of Israel is consistent with God's promises (Romans 9:6–13); **second**, that it is consistent with His Person (Romans 9:14–24); **third**, that it is consistent with God's prophetic revelation (Romans 9:25–29); and **fourth**, that it is consistent with God's prerequisite of salvation by faith (Romans 9:30–33). ([Romans 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Highly Recommended Resource](#))

**BUT IT IS NOT AS THOUGH THE WORD OF GOD HAS FAILED: Ouch hoion de hoti ekpeptoken (3SRPI) o logos tou theou**

- Ro 3:3; 11:1,2; Numbers 23:19; Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 24:35; John 10:35; 2 Ti 2:13; Hebrews 6:17,18

- Romans 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GOD'S WORD STANDS!

The psalmist affirms

"Forever, O LORD,  
Thy word is settled in heaven."

**But** - pause and ponder this **term of contrast**.

Keep in mind that by the time of this letter to the Romans, the NT church was composed predominantly of **Gentile** believers and that Jews had begun to reject the Gospel in large numbers. In such a setting, it might look as if God's word had failed in regard to the Jew. What was the problem?

**Word of God** - Phrase appears 47x in 46v in **NAS** -

1 Sam 9:27; 2 Sam 16:23; 1 Kgs 12:22; 1 Chr 17:3; Prov 30:5; Matt 15:6; Mark 7:13; Luke 3:2; 5:1; 8:11, 21; 11:28; John 10:35; Acts 4:31; 6:2, 7; 8:14; 11:1; 13:5, 7, 46; 17:13; 18:11; Rom 9:6; 1 Cor 14:36; 2 Cor 2:17; 4:2; Eph 6:17; Phil 1:14; Col 1:25; 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 4:5; 2 Tim 2:9; Titus 2:5; Heb 4:12; 6:5; 11:3; 13:7; 1 Pet 1:23; 2 Pet 3:5; 1 John 2:14; Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 19:13; 20:4

**Word** (3055) (**logos** [word study] from **lego** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated **word** which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. In the Greek mind and as used by secular and philosophical Greek writers, **lógos** did not mean merely the name of an object but was an expression of the thought behind that object's name.

Let me illustrate this somewhat subtle nuance in the meaning of **lógos** with an example from the Septuagint (LXX) (Greek of the Hebrew OT) in which **lógos** is used in the well known phrase **the Ten Commandments**. The Septuagint translates this phrase using the word **lógos** as "the ten (**deka**) words (**logoi**)" (Ex 34:28), this phrase giving us the familiar term **Decalogue**. Clearly each of the "Ten Commandments" is not just words but words which express a thought or concept behind those words. This then is the essence of the meaning of **lógos** and so it should not be surprising that depending on the context **lógos** is translated with words such as "saying, instruction, message, news, preaching, question, statement, teaching, etc". This understanding of **lógos** also helps understand John's repeated usage of this Greek word as a synonym for the second Person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ ([see discussion below](#)).

**Lógos** then is a general term for speaking, but always used for speaking with rational content. **Lógos** is a word uttered by the human voice which embodies an underlying concept or idea. When one has spoken the sum total of their thoughts concerning something, they have given to their hearer a total concept of that thing. Thus the word **lógos** conveys the idea of "a total concept" of anything. **Lógos** means the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known. It can also refer to the inward thought or reason itself. Note then that **lógos** does not refer merely to a part of speech but to a concept or idea. In other words, in classical Greek, **lógos** never meant just a **word** in the grammatical sense as the mere name of a thing, but rather the thing referred to, the material, not the formal part. In fact, the Greek language has 3 other words (**rhema** [word study], **onoma**, **epos**) which designate a **word** in its grammatical sense. **Lógos** refers to the total expression whereas **rhema** (see word study) for example is used of a part of speech in a sentence. In other words **rhema**, emphasizes the parts rather than the whole.

**Wuest - ekpiptō** = "to fall out of, to fall down from, to fail, to fall from a place which one cannot keep, to fall powerless, be without effect." The verb is in the perfect tense speaking here in connection with the negative, of the fact that the Word with reference to Israel has not failed to work effectively in time past and at present is still potentially effective. Denney explains the statement, "For not all those who are out of Israel as a source (the physical nation) these are Israel (the spiritual remnant). The meaning is, But in spite of my grief, I do not mean to say any such thing as that the Word of God has come to nothing. For not all they who are of Israel, i.e., born of the patriarch, are Israel, i.e., the people of God. This is merely an application of our Lord's words, That which is born of the flesh is flesh. It is not what we get from our fathers and mothers that ensures our place in the family of God." Regarding verse 7, the same authority says; "Nor because they are Abraham's seed, are they all tekna, i.e., children in the sense which entitles them to the inheritance... God from the very first made a distinction here, and definitely announced that the seed of Abraham to which the promise belonged should come in the line of Isaac—not of Ishmael, though he also could call Abraham father." Commenting on the words, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," Denney says: "The words literally mean that in the line of Isaac, Abraham should have the posterity which would properly bear his name, and inherit the promises made to him by God. Isaac's descendants are the true Abrahamidae."

**Failed** (1601) (**ekpipto** from **ek** = from + **pípto** = to fall) literally means to fall from or fall off or fall out, to drop off or away as would a withered, dying flower (reflecting the effect of scorching heat James 1:11, 1Pe 1:24) or as would a fetter or chain (Acts 12:7). Drop off or fall short. **Ekpipto** was clearly a nautical term in Paul's day for it is used 4x in Luke's description of the shipwreck scene (Acts 27:17, 26, 29, 32). **Ekpipto** was used in the ancient Greek theater of one who could not remember his lines, so that **ekpipto** meant he could not play his part. **Ekpipto** was a technical naval term to describe a ship driven off course, to drift, to be cast adrift, basically because of inability to follow the course on which the ship had initially set sail. To lose one's way. In the passive sense = to be driven out, excluded, or lose something. (NIDNTT)

**Ekpipto** is used figuratively in Ro 9:6 where it means to fall away and to fail, to be without effect or to be in vain (to become inefficient, come to nothing, be annulled, become inadequate). In other words here it conveys the sense of non-fulfillment of the divine promise. Paul's point is this is something that can never happen to God's Word of promise - it shall never, ever lose its intended effect or efficacy (cp Isaiah 55:10-12, listen to the last words of Joshua - Joshua 21:45, Josh 23:14, 15). God's Word does not fail, because it ultimately is perfectly fully fulfilled in the Living Word, Christ Jesus (cf Jn 1:1-3, "For all of the promises of God in Him [Jesus, the Living Word] are yea, and in Him Amen" = 2Cor 1:20KJV, Heb 1:1-2-note).

**Ekpipto** is also used figuratively in Gal 5:4 of "fallen from grace," (driven off course, as a ship captain on the seas) signifying that their works mentality made grace of "no effect." Grace was still amazing grace, but their efforts to achieve righteousness by keeping the Law, in effect took the "grace" out of grace, so to speak. If works are water and grace is oil, you can see that they simply DO NOT MIX! As an aside, this is the same spiritual dynamic that occurs in anyone (believers or not), whenever we begin to fall into the subtle snare of keeping a list of laws or regulations ("I won't do this," "I will do that," etc - note the emphasis on the personal pronoun "I", the middle letter of the word **pride**!!!). Why? Because laws were not given to make us more spiritual, but to show us our desperate need for the Spirit, Who Alone can give us the desire and the power to keep the law. Beware, this line between law and grace is very easily blurred under the guise of seeking to be "spiritual."

**Wuest** - **ekpiptō** = "to fall out of, to fall down from, to fail, to fall from a place which one cannot keep, to fall powerless, be without effect." (In Romans 9:6) The verb is in the **perfect tense** speaking here in connection with the negative, of the fact that the Word with reference to Israel has not failed to work effectively in time past and at present is still potentially effective.

**Ekpipto** - 10x in 10v - failed(1), fall(1), fall away(1), fallen(1), falls off(2), fell off(1), run aground(3).

Acts 12:7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains **fell off** his hands.

Acts 27:17 After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they **might run aground** (**ekpipto** here pictures the so to speak *falling off* course) on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.

Acts 27:26 "But we must **run aground** on a certain island."

Acts 27:29 Fearing that we **might run aground** somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.

Acts 27:32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it **fall away**.

Romans 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has **failed**. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have **fallen** from grace.

James 1:11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

1 Peter 1:24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER **FALLS OFF**,

2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and **fall from** your own steadfastness,

**Ekpipto** - 15x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - Deut 19:5 (the iron head **slips off** the handle); 2Kgs 6:5 (he axe head **fell into** the water) ; Job 14:2 (describes man who "wITHERS"); Job 15:30, 33; 24:9; Eccl 10:10; Isa 6:13 (Whose stump remains when it is **felled**); Isa 14:12 (How you [Satan] **have fallen** from heaven); Isa 28:1, 4; 40:7; Dan 7:20;

Isaiah 40:7 The grass withers, the flower fades (flower **fades**), When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;

Surely the people are grass.

Near the end of his life, **Joshua** addressed the issue of God's Word "failing" declaring to Israel...

"Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed. And it shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you." (Joshua 23:14-15)

**FOR THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL WHO ARE DESCENDED FROM ISRAEL: ou gar pantes oi ex Israel houtoi Israel:**

- Ro 2:28,29; 4:12, 13, 14, 15, 16; John 1:47; Galatians 6:16
- Romans 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

"For it is not everybody who is a descendant of Jacob (Israel) who belongs to [the true] Israel" (Amplified)

**For (gar)** is a **term of explanation**, which should always prompt you to pause and ask yourself what is the Spirit seeking to explain?

Earlier in this letter **Paul** explained that...

he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. (Romans 2:28, 29-note)

Paul explains that God's Word has not failed because not all of physical Israel (Jew by birth) are "spiritual" Israel (Jew by new birth).

The natural "Israel" is the national, cultural, political Israel, all of whom were to be circumcised physically.

The "supernatural" Israel is represented by a "**remnant**" who God in great mercy and grace preserved.

The **church** is emphatically not the continuation of "political Israel" as is taught by a number of commentators. In fact, even scholars as highly esteemed as John Calvin arrived at this erroneous interpretation (see the **Israel of God** for why this is an erroneous interpretation). The point is that God is not finished with Israel or the Jew as explained later in Romans 9-11.

Now, if God made promises to Israel as His chosen earthly people, how can this be compatible with Israel's present rejection and with the Gentiles being brought into the place of blessing? Paul explains that this does not indicate any breach of promise on God's part. He goes on to show that God has always had a sovereign election process based upon promise and not just on natural descent. Just because a person was born into the nation of Israel does not mean that they are automatically an heir to the promises of God given through Abraham to Israel. Within the nation of Israel, God has always had a genuine believing **remnant** who have had heart circumcision (related topic **Scriptures on Circumcision**) and not just external physical circumcision. So Paul will show God sovereignly chose Isaac as the child of promise and the spiritual descendant of Abraham instead of the first born Ishmael. Then God sovereignly chose the twin Jacob over the firstborn Esau even before birth, even before they did anything good or bad to emphasize that it was God's choice who would be shown mercy and compassion. Remember that God is God and we are not!

Keep the following table in mind as you study Romans 9-11.

Summary of Romans 9-11		
Romans 9	Romans 10	Romans 11
Past Election	Present Rejection	Future Reception
God's Sovereignty Israel's Election by God	Man's responsibility Israel's Rejection of God	God's Ways Higher God Not Rejecting Israel

Gentiles who believe are also of Abraham's spiritual seed ("And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" Galatians 3:29) but in this passage in Romans 9, Paul is not considering the Gentiles but only the "two kinds of Israelites", the natural and the supernatural (spiritual) Jew.

Paul now offers to show in defense of God's word that the inner reality does not correspond to the outer appearance, for "they are

not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (v6-7), but there is a true Israel, an born again Israel within physical Israel, that is comprised, not of "the children of the flesh," but of the children of the promise.

Jesus made a similar distinction when talking with the unbelieving Jews in Jn 8:33-39. They said to Him, "We are Abraham's descendants ..." (John 8:33).

Jesus admitted this, saying, "I know you are Abraham's descendants" (John 8:37).

But when they said,

"Abraham is our father" the Lord replied

"If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39).

In other words, they were physically descended from Abraham, but they didn't have Abraham's faith and therefore they were not his spiritual children. In fact Jesus went on to explain to the spiritually unregenerate Jews...

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. (John 8:44, read what occurred at the end of this discourse - Jn 8:57, 58, 59! Notice how John introduced this section - Jn 8:30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 - Point: There is a "belief" which does not lead to salvation. **See related studies** - pisteuo - word study; James 2:14-26 on saving faith - notes begin at Jas 2:14)

**Romans 9:7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."**

**Greek:** [oud' hoti eisin \(3SPAI\)](#) [sperma Abraam, pantes tekna. all'](#), [En Isaak klethesetai \(3SFPI\)](#) [soi sperma.](#)

**Amplified:** And they are not all the children of Abraham because they are by blood his descendants. No, [the promise was] Your descendants will be called and counted through the line of Isaac [though Abraham had an older son].(3)

**ESV:** and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

**ICB:** And only some of Abraham's descendants are true children of Abraham. But God said to Abraham: "The descendants I promised you will be from Isaac."

**NKJV:** nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

**NIV:** Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

**NLT:** Just the fact that they are descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too.

**Philips:** Nor can all Abraham's descendants be considered truly children of Abraham. The promise was that 'in Isaac your seed shall be called'.

**Wuest:** nor because they are offspring of Abraham are all children, but: In Isaac an offspring shall be named for you.

**Young's Literal:** nor because they are seed of Abraham are all children, but -- 'in Isaac shall a seed be called to thee;'

**NOR ARE THEY ALL CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY ARE ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS (singular - seed) oud hoti eisin (3SPAI) sperma Abraam pantes tekna:**

- Luke 3:8; 16:24,25,30; John 8:37, 38, 39; Philipians 3:3

- Romans 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Nor are they all children** - They all born again, believers in Messiah is Paul's emphasis.

**Because they are Abraham's descendants** (because they are by blood his descendants) - Speaks of his physical seed, not his spiritual seed. Jews rightly can trace their ethnicity to Abraham. But Paul is saying that ethnicity does not automatically equate with spirituality, so to speak (see Paul's contrast in Php 3:2-note and Php 3:3-note)! Listen to the words of the greatest Teacher speaking to the chosen people...

John 8:37 "I know that you are Abraham's offspring (Jesus does not argue that the Jews are Abraham's seed, his physical offspring); **yet** (dramatic term of contrast) you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father (Satan - see Jn 8:44 - as an aside there are only two "families" in all humankind - Family of God, Family of Satan - not saying the latter are worshipers of Satan, but that he is their "spiritual father" so to speak - that is the clear teaching of Scripture, where we find it "palatable" or not!). 39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus \*said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham." (Abraham's most important "deed" was the expression of faith - see Genesis 15:6, cp Jesus on working the works of God - Jn 6:28, 29).

**Children** (5043) (**teknon** from **tíkto** = bring forth, bear children, be born) means literally the child produced. **Teknon** is a child as viewed in relation to his parents or family. This word takes on special theological significance when the Bible calls believers the children of God and that is the primary idea in this verse.

**Teknon** - 99x in 91v - NAS = child(13), children(76), children's(2), son(8), sons(1).

Matt 2:18; 3:9; 7:11; 9:2; 10:21; 15:26; 18:25; 19:29; 21:28; 22:24; 23:37; 27:25; Mark 2:5; 7:27; 10:24, 29f; 12:19; 13:12; Luke 1:7, 17; 2:48; 3:8; 7:35; 11:13; 13:34; 14:26; 15:31; 16:25; 18:29; 19:44; 20:31; 23:28; John 1:12; 8:39; 11:52; Acts 2:39; 7:5; 13:33; 21:5, 21; Rom 8:16f, 21; 9:7f; 1 Cor 4:14, 17; 7:14; 2 Cor 6:13; 12:14; Gal 4:19, 25, 27f, 31; Eph 2:3; 5:1, 8; 6:1, 4; Phil 2:15, 22; Col 3:20f; 1 Thess 2:7, 11; 1 Tim 1:2, 18; 3:4, 12; 5:4; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4, 6; Philemon 1:10; 1 Pet 1:14; 3:6; 2 Pet 2:14; 1 John 3:1f, 10; 5:2; 2 John 1:1, 4, 13; 3 John 1:4; Rev 2:23; 12:4f.

**Descendants** (4690) (**sperma** from **speíro** = to sow) refers to seed sown as containing the germ of new fruit and here clearly represents the physical offspring of Abraham.

As discussed above, the Jews would say to Paul "We have **Abraham** as our father" but Paul would remind them that Abraham had two sons and only through one son was the true heir. Isaac appropriated the promise by faith just as Abram & just as every Jew or Gentile must do in order to be born from above a new creature.

**Sperma** - 43x in 40v - NAS - children(7), conceive\*(1), descendant(4), descendants(16), posterity(1), seed(10), seeds(4).

Matt 13:24, 27, 32, 37f; 22:24f; Mark 4:31; 12:19ff; Luke 1:55; 20:28; John 7:42; 8:33, 37; Acts 3:25; 7:5f; 13:23; Rom 1:3; 4:13, 16, 18; 9:7f, 29; 11:1; 1 Cor 15:38; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 3:16, 19, 29; 2 Tim 2:8; Heb 2:16; 11:11, 18; 1 John 3:9; Rev 12:17.

**BUT THRU ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS** (singular - seed) **WILL BE NAMED** (called) : **all en Isaak klethesetai (3SFPI) soi sperma:**

- Genesis 21:12; Hebrews 11:18
- Romans 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But - term of contrast**

**Through Isaac** - This is more literally "in Isaac."

Here in Romans Paul quotes the Septuagint (LXX) of Genesis 21:12 verbatim.

Of all the biological children of Abraham, only **Isaac** was in the line of promise. Writing to the Galatians Paul stated (allegorically speaking) that...

it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son (Ishmael) by the bondwoman (Hagar) was born according to the flesh, and the **son** (Isaac) by the free woman (Sarah) through the **promise**. (Gal 4:22-23)



Not through [Ishmael](#) but through [Isaac](#). The thinking Jew might well agree and say of course this is true. Ishmael is an Arab and we don't want him. We are of Isaac's seed. But Paul will move to Isaac's twin sons, of whom Esau was the firstborn and should have received the birthright but did not. In that situation unlike Ishmael and Isaac who had separate mothers, these two had the same mother and the same father and yet the firstborn was not chosen by God.

**Romans 9:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.**

**Greek:** [tout' estin](#), (3SPAI) [ou ta tekna tes sarkos tauta tekna tou theou](#), [alla ta tekna tes epaggelias logizetai](#) (3SPPI) [eis sperma](#)

**Amplified:** That is to say, it is not the children of the body [of Abraham] who are made God's children, but it is the offspring to whom the promise applies that shall be counted [as Abraham's true] descendants.

**ESV:** This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

**ICB:** This means that not all of Abraham's descendants are God's true children. Abraham's true children are those who become God's children because of the promise God made to Abraham.

**NKJV:** That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

**NIV:** In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

**NLT:** This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. It is the children of the promise who are considered to be Abraham's children.

**Philips:** That means that it is not the natural descendants who automatically inherit the promise, but, on the contrary, that the children of the promise (i.e. sons of God) are to be considered truly Abraham's children.

**Wuest:** That is, not the children of the flesh, these are children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for offspring;

**Young's Literal:** that is, the children of the flesh -- these are not children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for seed;

**THAT IS, IT IS NOT THE CHILDREN OF THE FLESH WHO ARE CHILDREN OF GOD: tout estin (3SPAI) ou ta tekna tes sarkos tauta tekna tou theou:**

- Ro 4:11-16; Galatians 4:22-31
- Romans 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**That is** - "The Old Testament saying amounts to this" (Vincent).

**Not (ou)** - absolute negation.

**Children of flesh** - natural children, natural descendants of Abraham.

**Children** (5043) (teknon) born ones.

**Flesh** (4561) (sarx) physical flesh not spiritual (fallen) flesh of Adam.

**Children of God** - Contrary to prevalent popular opinion, all men, women and children are NOT children of God. This phrase conveys the meaning of family members. The only humans who can rightfully, legitimately call God "Father" (Abba) are those who are in His family by grace through faith!

John 1:11 He (Jesus) came to His own (Jews, Israel), and those who were His own did not receive Him (believe in Him, receive Him as their Redeemer, their Savior). 12 But (thank God for the "contrasts" in Scripture) as many as received Him (note carefully - it does not say "As many who asked Jesus into their

heart." The idea of receive is to repent and believe) to them He gave the right to become **CHILDREN OF GOD**, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (He alone is in full control of salvation! Yes, in that regard yours truly is Calvinistic!)

1John 3:1-note See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called **CHILDREN OF GOD**; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 (note) Beloved, now we are **CHILDREN OF GOD**, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. 3 (note) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

**Children of God** - This phrase occurs 11x in 11v in the **NAS** (none in the OT) - John 1:12; 11:52; Acts 17:29; Rom 8:16, 21; 9:8; Phil 2:15; 1 John 3:1f, 10; 5:2.

As a practical application it is worth noting that many professors in churches think they are God's children because they were raised in a Christian home, been baptized in water, their father was the pastor, etc. As Jesus made clear...

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (the single criterion by which lost men become "children of promise"), he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

**BUT THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE ARE REGARDED AS DESCENDANTS: alla ta tekna tes epaggelias logizetai (3SPPI) eis sperma:**

- Ge 31:15; Ps 22:30; 87:6; Jn 1:13; Gal 3:26, 27, 28, 29; 4:28; 1Jn 3:1,2
- Romans 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **But - term of contrast**

**Children of the promise** - Abraham's offspring or seed. Isaac was Abraham's child of promise.

**Henry Morris** - this has a dual application. Only those Israelites who are saved by faith in Christ participate in God's ultimate promises to the nation of Israel. Likewise all who come to Christ by faith, whether Jew or Gentile, are spiritual children of Abraham, saved through the promised seed.

**Promise (1860)** (**epaggelia/epangelia** from **epí** = intensifies verbal meaning + **aggéllō** = to tell, declare) literally means to "tell at or upon" and originally referred to an announcement or declaration (especially of a favorable message) (see Acts 23:21). In other words the first sense of **epaggelia** is that of a . declaration to do something which came to be associated with the implication of obligation to carry out what is stated and thus the meaning of a promise, pledge or offer. In Scripture, **epaggelia** refers primarily to God's pronouncements that provide assurance of what He intends to do.

**Walter Kaiser** makes the interesting statement that "Almost every NT use of the word **promise** (epaggelia) points back to the OT."

**Epaggelia** referred to a promise given (2 Co1:20; Ep 1:13; 6:2; 1Ti 4:8; 2Pe 3:4, 9; Esther 4:7).

**Epaggelia** was often used of special promises, e.g., to Abraham (Acts 7:6, 17; Ro 4:16, 20; Heb 6:12, 15; 7:6; 11:9) or Isaac (Ro 9:9; Gal 4:23).

**Epaggelia** refers to the promise of eternal life in Christ, appointed to announce it (Heb 4:1; 8:6; 9:15; 1Jn 2:25)

**Epaggelia** initially in Greek was primarily a legal term denoting summons, a promise to do or give something, but in the NT speaks primarily of the promises of God, the first four NT uses referring to the **promise** of the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49+, Acts 1:4+, Acts 2:33, 39+). The promises of God are absolutely dependable (2Cor. 1:20). Most of God's promises bring benefit to those who are designated as recipients of His promises. God's promises are not earned, but rather humbly received.

In Acts Luke records this instructive passage...

"And we preach to you the good news of the **promise** made to the fathers, (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob to whom and through whom the Abrahamic Covenant passed) that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.' (Acts 13:32-33+)

**Albert Barnes** writes that "The covenants of **promise** were those various arrangements which God made with his people, by which

he promised them future blessings, and especially by which he promised that the Messiah should come. To be in possession of them was regarded as a high honour and privilege; and Paul refers to it here to show that, though the Ephesians had been by nature without these, yet they had now been brought to enjoy all the benefits of them." (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**John Reid** summarizes **promise** - The idea of promise is one of the great elements of Scripture teaching. It is a peculiarity of the Bible; no other religious book has that as a distinguishing feature. It is the element of promise that runs through its various books, binds them into an organic whole, and unites in a vital union the OT and the NT. The promise of the OT is fulfilled in the blessing of the NT. Many promises may be taken as predictions. They constitute at least part of the content of prophecy. To write about promise in all its relations would involve the discussion of prophecy, the preparation for the coming of Christ, the manifestation of the grace of God, etc. In what follows, reference is restricted to 'promise' in the apostolic writings of the NT. ([Promise Promise \(2\)](#))

**TDNT on Promise** in Classical Greek -

- a. The first sense is "to indicate," "declare," "declaration," "report."
- b. When the state declares something, it becomes an "order."
- c. In law we find the senses "accusation" and "delivery of a judgment."
- d. We then find the senses "to declare an achievement," "to show one's mastery," "to profess a subject."
- e. Another sense is "to offer," "to promise," "to vow." As regards promises, tension between word and deed is felt, so that promises are often seen as worthless.
- f. A special type of promise is the "promise of money," and in this sense the idea of a "subscription" or "donation" arises (state liturgies, gifts to rulers at their accession, priests promising gifts in support of their candidature).
- g. In the Hellenistic period we also find a sacral use for the "proclamation" of a festival. Among all the instances, only one example has been found for the promise of a deity.

**Related Resources:**

- American Tract Society [Promise](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Promise](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Promise](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Promise Promises of God](#)
- Spurgeon's Illustration Collection [Promises](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Promise](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Promise](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Promise Promise \(2\)](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Promises](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Promise](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Promise](#)
- Condensed Biblical Encyclopedia [Promised Land](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Promise](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Promises of God Promise](#)

**1828 Webster's** definition of **Promise** -

1. In a general sense, a declaration, written or verbal made by one person to another, which binds the person who makes it, either in honor, conscience or law, to do or forbear a certain act specified; a declaration which gives to the person to whom it is made, a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of the act. The promise of a visit to my neighbor, gives him a right to expect it, and I am bound in honor and civility to perform the promise. Of such a promise human laws have no cognizance; but the fulfillment of it is one of the minor moralities, which civility kindness and Strict integrity require to be observed.

2. In law, a declaration verbal or written, made by one person to another for a good or valuable consideration, in the nature of a covenant, by which the promiser binds himself, and as the case may be, his legal representatives, to do or forbear some act; and gives to the promisee a legal right to demand and enforce a fulfillment.

3. A binding declaration of something to be done or given for another's benefit; as the promise of a grant of land. A promise may be absolute or conditional; lawful or unlawful; express or implied. An absolute promise

must be fulfilled at all events. The obligation to fulfill a conditional promise depends on the performance of the condition. An unlawful promise is not binding, because it is void; for it is incompatible with a prior paramount obligation of obedience to the laws. An express promise, is one expressed in words or writing. An implied promise, is one which reason and justice dictate. If I hire a man to perform a day's labor, without any declaration that I will pay him, the law presumes a promise on my part that I will give him a reasonable reward, and will enforce such implied promise.

6 . In Scripture, the promise of God is the declaration or assurance which God has given in his word of bestowing blessings on his people. Such assurance resting on the perfect justice, power, benevolence and immutable veracity of God, cannot fail of performance. ([Promise - Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#))

**Epaggelia** - 52x in 50v (note concentration in Hebrews = 14x in 13v and also in Galatians 3) -**NAS** = promise (37), promised (1), promises (12), what was promised (2).

Luke 24:49 "And behold, I am sending forth the **promise** of My Father upon you (Referring to the Holy Spirit Jn 14:26; 15:26; cf. Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:1-4); but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high (Acts 1:8-note)."

Acts 1:4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had **promised** (the Holy Spirit - cf (Lk 11:13; 24:49; Jn 7:39; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

**Comment:** Here epaggelia is used as a [metonymy](#) thing promised, what was promised

Acts 2:33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the **promise** of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:39 "For the **promise** (Holy Spirit) is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

Acts 7:17 "But as the time of the **promise** was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt,

Acts 13:23 "From the descendants of this man (David - Acts 13:22), according to **promise**, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,

Acts 13:32 "And we preach to you the good news of the **promise** made to the fathers,

Acts 23:21 "So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the **promise** from you."

Acts 26:6 "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the **promise** made by God to our fathers;

Romans 4:13-note For the **promise** to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

Romans 4:16-note For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the **promise** will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Romans 4:20-note yet, with respect to the **promise** of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

Romans 9:4-note who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the **promises**,

Romans 9:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the **promise** are regarded as descendants. Romans 9:9 For this is the word of **promise**: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

Romans 15:8-note For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the **promises** given to the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob),

2 Corinthians 1:20 For as many as are the **promises** of God, in Him (Jesus) they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Galatians 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the **promise** of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:16 Now the **promises** were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. Galatians 3:17 What I am saying is this: the Law (Mosaic Covenant), which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the **promise**. Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a **promise**; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Galatians 3:21 Is the Law then contrary to the **promises** of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the **promise** by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to **promise**.

Galatians 4:23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the **promise**.

Galatians 4:28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of **promise**.

Ephesians 1:13-note In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of **promise**,

Ephesians 2:12-note remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of **promise**, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 3:6-note to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the **promise** in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

Ephesians 6:2-note HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a **promise**),

1 Timothy 4:8-note for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds **promise** for the present life and also for the life to come.

2 Timothy 1:1-note Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the **promise** of life in Christ Jesus,

Hebrews 4:1-note Therefore, let us fear if, while a **promise** remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 6:12-note so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the **promises**.

Hebrews 6:15-note And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the **promise**.

Hebrews 6:17-note In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the **promise** the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

Hebrews 7:6-note But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the **promises**.

Hebrews 8:6-note But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better **promises**.

Hebrews 9:15-note For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called (effectual call) may receive the **promise** of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 10:36-note For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was **promised**.

Hebrews 11:9-note By faith he (Abraham - Heb 11:8) lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign

land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same **promise**;

Hebrews 11:13-note All these died in faith, without receiving the **promises**, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Hebrews 11:17-note By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the **promises** was offering up his only begotten son;

Hebrews 11:33-note who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained **promises**, shut the mouths of lions,

Hebrews 11:39-note And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was **promised**,

2 Peter 3:4-note and saying, "Where is the **promise** of His coming? (eg, Jn 14:3) For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

2 Peter 3:9-note The Lord is not slow about His **promise** (this promise refers to destruction of the world - 2Pe 3:7), as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

1 John 2:25 This is the **promise** which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

**Epaggelia** is used on 3 times in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - Esther 4:7, Ps 56:8, Amos 9:6.

Wayne Detzler on **Promise** ([New Testament words in today's language](#))...

**MEANING** - The Greek words relating to the idea of "promise" are **epaggelia** (a promise) and **epangellomai** (to make a promise). They contain the root word, angel, which means to "proclaim," "announce," or "declare." In other words, a promise is a public declaration which must come true in order to be believed.

In ancient times, the Greeks used this word to describe a simple announcement. Homer, for instance, used epangellomai to speak of a public pronouncement or statement of intent. In Greek literature it was never a case of pagan gods making promises to people. Instead it always involved people making promises to the gods.

On the other hand, in the Septuagint Greek Old Testament, Jehovah God was often making promises to His people. A primary example was Abraham. In response to Abraham's obedience God promised to heap blessing on him. Furthermore, God would lead Abraham's family to the Promised Land. Additionally, God would raise up from Abraham a whole people of promise, the Jews. Jehovah God is rich in promises.

**BIBLE USAGE** - The word for promise (**epaggelia**) appears 52 times in the New Testament, and the verb form **epangellomai** occurs 15 times. **First and foremost God is the Giver of promises.** In fact, Paul said that the promises of God are absolutely dependable (2 Cor. 1:20). God never yet has defaulted on a promise, and He never will. "The promise of the Father" was Jesus' way of referring to the coming Holy Spirit (John 14:26). After His ascension the disciples waited patiently and prayerfully in Jerusalem until the Spirit fell on them all (Acts 2:4).

In his indictment of Jewish unfaithfulness, the martyr Stephen charged the people with ignoring the fulfilled promises of God (Acts 7:51-53).

One of God's promises was the birth of Isaac, despite the advanced age of Abraham and Sarah (Ro 4:21). The Jews' entire national existence was an expression of God's promises. The coming of Messiah was construed by Christians as a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Titus 1:2).

**God's promises to Abraham are often mentioned in the Book of Hebrews** Abraham waited patiently for one promise, and it was revealed (Heb. 6:15). Both the Promised Land and the promised son were received, because Abraham and Sarah waited (Heb 11:9-16). As a result, the writer of Hebrews urged Christians to cultivate patience in waiting for the promise of God (Heb 10:36).

This dominant theme of the promises of God appears throughout the New Testament Scriptures. The land of Israel was seen as the promise of God (Acts 7:17). Salvation's message, the Gospel, was likewise promised by Jehovah (Acts 13:32). Christ confirmed the promises of God (Ro 15:8). The final facet of God's promise is the coming of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14). The entire plan of salvation is considered to be a promise of God.

Most of God's promises bring benefit to people. He promised a Saviour, who would sort out the sin of the world (Acts 2:38-40; 13:23; 26:6). By the same token, He promised the Holy Spirit to stimulate us to spiritual living

(Gal. 3:14). In Christ the promise of eternal life has come true (John 3:16; Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:11-13).

Just as God's promises bring blessing, so human promises often cause catastrophes. In that most evil of all treachery, the Jewish leaders promised money to Judas in exchange for the betrayal of Jesus Christ, God incarnate (Mark 14:11).

Paul warned against those who make lying professions or promises, and thus go away from the true faith (1Tim. 6:21). False teachers often promise people freedom, but instead enslave their foolish followers (2Peter 2:19).

From start to finish, God has always stood true to His Word. His promises to Abraham have been fulfilled in salvation for all mankind. Someone estimated that there are 8,000 promises in the Bible. It is my opinion that there are probably more, and it is my conviction that every one of them either has been or will be fulfilled.

**ILLUSTRATIONS** - Most Christian leaders have commented on the promises of God.

An interesting remark is attributed to Billy Bray (1794-1868), a great revival preacher of Cornwall, England. According to that rough and ready revivalist: "The promises of God are just as good as ready money any day."

Billy Graham emphasized the promise of Christ's return:

"Not only does the Old Testament tell us to expect the second coming of Christ, not only is the New Testament filled with the promise of it, but if we would study the historic documents of our major denominations, we would find that our founders all believed and accepted it. The most thrilling, glorious truth in all the world is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is the sure promise of the future."

An editor of The Sunday School Times was Phillip E. Howard, father of Elisabeth Elliot. Concerning the promises of God, Philip Howard wrote:

"Certainly there are promises in the Old Testament which relate to material things. But if God was faithful and merciful to Israel, whom He chose not because of their righteousness but only because of His love for them, how much more reason today to rest on the faithfulness of Him who gave His beloved Son for us! In that faithfulness is assured our right to God's promises."

According to F.R. Maltby:

"Jesus promised His disciples three things: They would be completely fearless, absurdly happy, and in constant trouble."

As the old song says: "I never promised you a rose garden."

Once when I was a little boy my mother came to investigate my uncharacteristic silence. She entered my parents' bedroom to find me standing on my father's large, black Bible. "Whatever are you doing?" my mother asked in horror.

My childish response was taken straight from the hymnbook. "Mother, I am `standing on the promises.' " Actually, I thought that was the meaning of the hymn.

"God's promises are like the stars," claimed David Nicholas. "The darker the night the brighter they shine."

Puritan writer Samuel Rutherford (1600-61) said concerning the promises of God:

"Swim through your temptations and troubles. Turn to the promises; they be our Lord's branches hanging over the water so that His half-drowned children may take a grip on them. Let go that grip and you sink to the bottom."

Many remember a chorus, popular in days gone by, which urged us to cling to God's promises:

**Every promise in the Book is mine,  
Every chapter, every verse, every line,  
All are blessings of His love divine,  
Every promise in the Book is mine.**

**William Barclay** on *epaggelia* and *epaggellesthai* - the words of promise (*epaggello*)

In the NT the noun **epaggelia** means a promise, and the verb **epaggellesthai** means to promise. We must begin by looking at the classical usage of these words, because in the case of these words the classical usages have very definite light to shed on the meaning and the flavor of these words in the NT.

(i) These words in classical Greek are very common—in fact they are almost technical—in connection with public announcements. They are the words which are used of the announcement of the public games, or of the public sacrifices to the gods. They are used of announcements which are everybody's concern.

(ii) In classical Greek there is more than one word for a promise, and the most interesting and significant thing about epaggelia is that its characteristic meaning is a promise which is freely offered and volunteered. It is not a promise which is extracted or coerced or wrung from someone.

It is not even a promise which is made on mutual approach and mutual agreement; that is *hyposchesis*. Epaggelia is characteristically a promise freely made and freely given. It has in it far more of a free offer than a conditioned promise.

(iii) In classical Greek epaggelia and epaggellesthai sometimes bear a meaning which has a tinge of fault in it. Sometimes they imply a profession, and a profession which is not met and carried out in actual practice. The words sometimes have to do with political canvassing.

They describe the manifesto of a candidate for office with all the promises of what he proposes to do, if he is elected to office, promises which are made rather as baits to the electorate than with any honest intention of fulfilling them.

The words sometimes have to do with the offers which the Sophists made. The Sophists were Greek teachers who arose in the fifth century E.C. and who offered to teach anybody anything for pay. The great teachers, like Plato and Isocrates, regarded these Sophists with intense dislike. They believed that all they did was to make people able to argue cleverly, until they could make the worse appear the better reason, and that they were out mainly for money.

They professed (*epaggellesthai*) to teach virtue, but it was an empty profession. They competed among themselves, each one professing to be able to give a better and more effective curriculum than his rival.

The words sometimes are used to describe a lover's professions. In the first flush of glamour and excitement of love, the lover will promise anything, but when it comes to actual performance, the professions are seen to be empty words. So the words can be used of a promise which is magnificently given, but meanly carried out.

Finally in regard to this usage, the words can be used of claims made for the curative properties of drugs. They are the words which would be used for the claims of patent medicines which profess to be panaceas for all diseases. Sometimes, then, these words can be used in connection with a profession which is not backed by deeds to fit it.

In the NT the words epaggelia and epaggellesthai are used uniformly and consistently of God's promises. There are, in fact, only two instances where they are used definitely of human promises.

In Acts 23.21 the Jews await the promise of the military commander of Jerusalem to send Paul down to Caesarea, in order that they may take steps to assassinate him on the way. In Mark 14.11 we read of the promise of the Jewish authorities to pay Judas the reward for information which will lead to the convenient arrest of Jesus.

But, apart from these two instances the words in the NT are always used of the divine promises and it is to these promises that we must proceed to turn our attention.

When we study the words of promise, we find that the promise did not start with the NT.

(i) God's promise was given specially to the nation of Israel (Rom. 9.4; Eph. 2.12). God offered Israel a unique position among the nations; in a special sense Israel was his peculiar people. The tragedy of Israel was that she misunderstood her function. She conceived of herself as having been promised special honour and privilege, when in point of fact she had been offered special duty and responsibility. God's offer is always the offer of a task to do for him.

(ii) God's promise to the nation of Israel derived specially from Abraham. The promise to Abraham was threefold. (a) It was the promise of the Promised Land (Acts 7.5; Heb. 11.9, 13). (b) It was the promise to Sara of a son, when the coming of a son seemed impossible (Rom. 9.9; Gal. 4.23, 28). (c) It was the promise that in him all nations of the earth would be blessed (Rom. 4.13; Gal. 3.16; Heb. 6.13).

Abraham was the man who was chosen that through him blessedness might come to the world. God chose Abraham as a man through whom he might act on men. God is always seeking men through whom he may act.



(iii) God's promise was the promise of a Messiah of the line of David (Acts 13.23, 32). The word Messiah and the word Christ are the same word. Messiah is the Hebrew and Christ is the Greek for the anointed one. God's promise was the promise of a King, through whom the kingdoms of the world would become the Kingdom of the Lord.

(iv) All the OT promises of God find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ (Rom. 15.8; II Cor. 1.20; Gal. 3.19, 29). When Jesus came, it was as if God said to men : 'Here is the one in whom all my promises come true.' Jesus is the one in whom there meet the dream of God and the dream of men.

(v) In Jesus there comes to men not only the fulfilment of the old promises; there comes also even better promises (Heb. 8.6; 9.15). Jesus is not only the consummation of the hopes and the dreams of the past; he brings to men things more precious and things greater than ever they had dreamed of.

This is important, because it means that Jesus does not only fulfil the OT prophecies and ideals; he surpasses them. He brings into life not only something which grew out of the past, but also something which is completely new.

When we see how far back the promise of God goes, it makes sense of history. We may promise a child some gift or some privilege with the intention of giving it to him when he is fit to use it and enjoy it and to enter into it. For instance, a father might plan and save in order to give a child the benefit of a university education, when the child came of age to benefit from such an education; and during the period of waiting, the father would do everything he could to train the child to reach a stage when he could be fit to enjoy the promise. That is what God did with men.

He chose a man; and chose a nation; that out of that nation there might come his Son in due time. Nor, in the choice of a nation, did God leave the rest of the world alone. Clement of Alexandria saw in pagan philosophy that which prepared the heathen for accepting Christ, just as much as the Law prepared the Jews. When we think of it this way we see the whole of history as a preparation of men to accept the promise and the offer of God.

Let us now see what God did promise to his people in Jesus Christ.

(i) God promised men the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24.29; Acts 1.4; 2.23; Eph. 1.15). The Holy Spirit may be taken to be God active in the lives and in the minds of men. The Holy Spirit is the power and the presence and the person who guides men into strength and adequacy of life, power and clarity of thought, lucidity and persuasiveness of speech. The promise of the Spirit is the promise of God to make us live and think with his own power.

(ii) With the gift of the Spirit, God promised the gift of forgiveness (Acts 2.39). It is never enough to think of forgiveness as simply the remission of some penalty which should have fallen upon us. Forgiveness is essentially the restoration of a lost relationship. It was not that God was estranged from men; it was that men were estranged from God. Through that which Jesus Christ has done men can become friends with God.

(iii) God promises men eternal life, life in time and life in eternity (I Tim. 4.8; Titus 1.2; II Tim. 1.1; James 1.12; I John 2.25). Eternal life is not simply life which goes on for ever. It is true that the NT never forgets that God promised men the resurrection from the dead (Acts 26.6). But the essential of eternal life is not simply duration; it is quality.

It is told that once a drooping and depressed soldier came to Julius Caesar with a request to be allowed to commit suicide and so to end his life. Caesar looked at the dispirited figure: 'Man', he said, 'were you ever really alive?'

Eternal life is something which can start here and now. Eternal life is the injection into the realm of time of something of the realm of eternity; it is the coming into human life of something of the life of God himself. It is the promise of God that if a man chooses to live life with Jesus Christ, heaven begins on earth. Into man's trouble and frustration there come the peace and power of God.

(iv) God promises the Kingdom to those who love him (James 2.5). It is too often the case that men think of the call of God as a call to a grim life in which all they wish for has to be given up, and all that is stern and hard has to be accepted. It is true that there is submission and discipline in the Christian life; but the end of the submission and the discipline is a kingdom, a royal power in life.

(v) God promises men the coming again of his Son (II Peter 3.4, 9). This simply means that God guarantees that there will be a consummation in history. The Stoics, who in NT times were the highest thinkers, conceived

of history as circular. They said that, once every so many thousands of years, there was a conflagration which engulfed and destroyed all things, and that then the same old process began all over again. History was a treadmill, not a march to a goal.

When we divest the idea of the Second Coming of all the purely Jewish apparatus, and the purely temporary pictures, we are left with the one significant truth that in history there comes the consummation of the triumph of Christ.

(vi) God promises rest for his people (Heb. 4.1). Some-one recently was asked what he thought was the greatest mark and characteristic of the modern world. His answer was : 'Tired eyes.'

Life is in any event a struggle; the Christian life takes all a man has to give. The NT describes it as a battle, a campaign, a race, an endurance test; but after it is ended there comes the rest of God; but rest is something which no man can enjoy unless he has done his best.

We must note still further the nature of this promise which is offered to the Christian.

(i) It is a promise of God (Luke 24.49; Acts 1.4). Here we find something which connects with one of the classical usages of these words. We saw, when we were studying the classical usage, that sometimes these words stood for a profession without a corresponding performance.

That is still so in the NT. I Tim. 2.10 urges Christian women to live a life which befits the faith which they profess. I Tim. 6.20, 21 speaks of the vain and empty knowledge which the intellectualists of the world profess. II Peter 2.19 speaks of those who make an illusory offer of liberty while they themselves are slaves to corruption. The NT more than once goes out of its way to stress the fact that God's promises, God's professions are true and dependable. God's promises are true for two reasons.

(a) They are true because God is faithful.'He is faithful that promised' (Heb. 10.23). God cannot lie (Titus 1.2). God even guaranteed the promises by swearing by himself (Heb. 6.17). The promises of God are guaranteed by the truth of God.

(b) They are true because God is powerful. God is able to perform that which he has promised (Rom. 4.21). The promises of God are therefore guaranteed by the power of God. Men's promises may be empty professions, but God's promises are to be utterly relied on because God's truth cannot lie, and God's power cannot fail.

(ii) The promises of God are founded on grace and not on law. We already saw that *epaggelia* in classical Greek is a promise and an offer freely and voluntarily made. The promises of God are not dependent on man's merit or man's performance; they are dependent solely on the sheer generosity of God. God's promises were made, not because of man's virtue, but because of God's mercy. Behind them is not man's merit, but God's love.

(iii) The promises of God are therefore to be appropriated by faith (Ro 4.14, 20; Gal. 3.24). They cannot be earned; they must be accepted. Man must rid himself of the pride which seeks to earn God's promises by works; he must have the humility which is ever content to be in God's debt, and which accepts God's promises in faith.

(iv) In spite of that the promises of God are the motive of man's amendment. It is because they have the promises that men must cleanse themselves (2Cor. 7.1). No man, who is in love, and whose love is answered, ever believed himself to be worthy of being loved. Any man who is loved well knows that he must spend all his life seeking to deserve the love which he can never deserve. It is so with us and God; we can never earn the promises of God, because they are given to us in the generosity of his love, but nonetheless, we are under the life-long obligation to spend all our lives trying to deserve that love.

So this finally brings us to the things we must bring fully to enjoy the promises of God.

(i) We must bring patience. It was through patience that Jesus himself earned the promise, and the same must be true of us (Heb. 6.12. 15). We have to run and not be weary; we have to endure to the end; we have to learn to wait. It is patience—the ability to bear things—which in the end inherits and obtains the promise.

(ii) We must bring loyalty. It was through their utter fidelity, their unshakable loyalty, that the martyrs obtained the promises (Heb. 11.33). It is the man who is faithful unto death who obtains the crown.

(iii) We must bring obedience. It is after we have done the will of God that we receive the promise (Heb. 10.36). As in so many things, so in this, the gifts of God are given, but they are not given away. The promises

of God are freely offered in the generosity of God. It is in patience, in loyalty, and in obedience that we shall most fully enter into them. (New Testament Words)

#### Quotations related to the **Promises of God**...

A little saint may enjoy a great **promise**. Anon.

God never **promises** us an easy time, only a safe arrival. Anon.

If God gives himself to us in **promises**, we must give ourselves to him in duties. Anon.

You cannot starve a man who is feeding on God's **promises**. Anon.

God's providence will fulfil all his promises. John Blanchard

The carrying out of God's **promises** is as certain as if already in the past tense. John Blanchard

The possibilities of prayer run parallel with the **promises** of God. E. M. Bounds

The resurrection of Christ is the Amen of all his **promises**. John Boys

The **promises** of God are just as good as ready money any day. Billy Bray

The **promises** of God are nothing more than God's covenant to be faithful to his people. It is his character that makes these promises valid. Jerry Bridges

Men many times eat their words, but God will never eat his. Thomas Brooks

The **promises** of God will eat their way over all the Alps of opposition. Thomas Brooks

The whole covenant is a bundle of **promises**. Thomas Brooks

We are refugees from the sinking ship of this present world-order, so soon to disappear; our hope is fixed in the eternal order, where the **promises** of God are made good to his people in perpetuity. F. F. Bruce

Distrust is cured by meditating upon the **promises** of God. John Calvin

Men ought not to expect more than God **promises**. John Calvin

Our faith should be borne up on wings by the **promises** of God. John Calvin

The **promises** of God are... only profitable to us when they are confirmed by the blood of Christ. John Calvin

We cannot rely on God's **promises** without obeying his commandments. John Calvin

Whatever God can do, he unquestionably will do, if he has **promised** it. John Calvin

The being of God may as well fail as the **promise** of God. Timothy Cruso

God has never promised to solve our problems. He has **not promised** to answer our questions... He has promised to go with us. Elisabeth Elliot

The greatness of the Promiser enhances the greatness of the **promises**. A. R. Fausset

It is better to be as low as hell with a **promise** than in paradise without one. John Flavel

God does not parcel himself out by retail, but gives his saints leave to challenge whatever he has as theirs. William Gurnall

God's **promise** is never out of his thoughts. William Gurnall

Mercy in the **promise** is as the apple in the seed. William Gurnall

Oh, it is sad for a poor Christian to stand at the door of the **promise** in the dark night of affliction afraid to draw the latch! William Gurnall

The **promises** are not a common for swine to root in; but Christ's sheep-walk for his flock to feed in. William Gurnall

The wise Christian will store himself with **promises** in health for sickness, and in peace for future perils. William Gurnall

We are not taking any risks when we step out on the Word of God. Vance Havner

God never **promises** more than he is able to perform. Matthew Henry

God's **promises** are to be our pleas in prayer. Matthew Henry

We must never **promise** ourselves more than God has promised us. Matthew Henry

The purposes of God are his concealed **promises**; the **promises**—his revealed purposes! Philip Henry

My future is as bright as the **promises** of God. Adoniram Judson

God's **promises** are, virtually, obligations that he imposes upon himself. F. W. Krummacher

It would be far easier to arrest the sun in its course than to hinder the performance of any **promise** that God has made to his people. George Lawson

God's **promise** is better than any bond or note on any bank, financial institution, or most stable government, for all these may have to repudiate their bond; God never does so. R. C. H. Lenski

What greater rebellion, impiety, or insult to God can there be than not to believe his **promises**? Martin Luther

We cannot close with Christ without a **promise**; and we must not close with a promise without Christ. Thomas Manton

Learn to put your hand on all spiritual blessings in Christ and say 'Mine'. F. B. Meyer

God never made a **promise** that was too good to be true. D. L. Moody

God's **promises** are like the stars; the darker the night the brighter they shine. David Nicholas

It is because God has **promised** certain things that we can ask for them with the full assurance of faith. A. W. Pink

It is a blessed fact that God's **promises** are as large as his exhortations, and for each of the latter there is one of the former exactly meeting it. A. W. Pink

Have faith in God, my heart, Trust and be unafraid; God will fulfil in every part Each **promise** he has made. Bryn Austin Rees

The **promises** of God have never borrowed help from moral probabilities. Thomas Sherlock

God's **promises** are made conditionally; not that the condition on our part deserves anything at God's hand, but when God hath given the condition he gives the thing promised. Richard Sibbes

Faith always sees the bow of covenant **promise** whenever sense sees the cloud of affliction. C. H. Spurgeon

God never out-**promised** himself yet. C. H. Spurgeon

God promises to keep his people, and he will keep his **promise**. C. H. Spurgeon

If we would venture more upon the naked **promise** of God, we should enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. C. H. Spurgeon

If you appropriate a **promise** it will not be pilfering: you may take it boldly and say, 'This is mine.' C. H. Spurgeon

My own weakness makes me shrink, but God's **promise** makes me brave. C. H. Spurgeon

The Lord does not play at **promising**. C. H. Spurgeon

The sight of the **promises** themselves is good for the eye of faith: the more we study the words of grace, the more grace shall we derive from the words. C. H. Spurgeon

Faith in the **promises** works obedience to the precepts. George Swinnoek

Upon the two hinges of faith and repentance do all the **promises** of the Bible hang. George Swinnoek

There is a living God. He has spoken in the Bible. He means what he says and will do all he has **promised**. J. Hudson Taylor

Let God's promises shine on your **problems**. Corrie ten Boom

A great part of a Christian's estate lies in bonds and bills of God's hand. John Trapp

Faith and the **promise** meeting make a happy mixture, a precious confection. John Trapp

The **promises** are good free-hold. John Trapp

The Bible is bespangled with **promises** made to prayer Thomas Watson

The **promises** are not made to strong faith but to true. Thomas Watson

Engraved as in eternal brass, The mighty **promise** shines; Nor can the powers of darkness raise Those everlasting lines. Isaac Watts

His every word of grace is strong As that which built the skies; The voice that rolls the stars along Speaks all the **promises**. Isaac Watts

I believe the **promises** of God enough to venture an eternity on them. Isaac Watts

God's **promises** are sealed to us, but not dates. Susanna Wesley

You never pray with greater power than when you plead the **promises** of God. William J. C. White

Christ is the fulfiller and fulfilment of all the **promises** of God because he is the sum and substance of them. Geoffrey B. Wilson

**Walter Kaiser** has this discussion on **Promise**...

God's announcement of His plan of salvation and blessing to His people, one of the unifying themes integrating the message and the deeds of the Old and New Testaments.

Promise Embraces Both Declaration and Deed God's promise begins with a declaration by God; it covers God's future plan for not just one race, but all the nations of the earth; and it focuses on the gifts and deeds that God will bestow on a few to benefit the many. We may define God's promise this way: the divine declaration or assurance made at first to Eve, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and then to the whole nation of Israel that: (1) He would be their God, (2) they would be His people, and (3) He would dwell in their midst. The blessing of land and of growth as a nation as well as the call to bless the nations was part of the promise to Abraham. Added to these words of assurance were a series of divine actions in history. These words and deeds of God began to constitute the continuously unfolding divine plan by which all the peoples and nations of the earth would benefit from that day to this.

The Old Testament did not use a specific Hebrew word for promise. It used quite ordinary words to encapsulate the pivotal promise of God: speak, say, swear.

The New Testament, however, does use both the noun promise (51 times) and the verb (11 times).

Promise in these references can denote either the form or the content of those words. They could refer either to the words themselves as promissory notes on which to base one's confidence for the future, or they could refer to the things themselves which were promised. Since God's one promise-plan was made up of many specifications, the plural form of "promises" appears 11 times in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the singular form was greatly predominant.

Varying Formulations of the Promise in the Old Testament In Genesis 1-11, the promise of God is represented by the successive "blessings" announced both in the creative order and on the human family—even in spite of their sin. The promise of blessing therefore, was both introductory to the promise and part of the promise itself.

The Promise and the Patriarchs For the fathers of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) we may speak of the promise in the singular even though it announced three significant elements. Each of the three elements are incomplete without the support of each other and without being interlocked into one promise-plan.

This triple promise included: (1) the promise of a seed or offspring (an heir; Genesis 12:7; Genesis 15:4; Genesis 17:16, Genesis 17:16,17:19; Genesis 21:12; Genesis 22:16-18; Genesis 26:3-4, Genesis 26:3-4,26:24; Genesis 28:13-14; Genesis 35:11-12), (2) the promise of land (an inheritance; Genesis 12:1, Genesis 12:1,12:7; Genesis 13:17; Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17:8; Genesis 24:7; Genesis 26:3-5; Genesis 28:13, Genesis 28:13,28:15; Genesis 35:12; Genesis 48:4; Genesis 50:24;) (Genesis 3:1) the promise of blessing on all the nations (a heritage of the gospel; Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18; Genesis 22:17-18; Genesis 26:4; Genesis 28:14).

To demonstrate the eternity and one-sidedness in the gracious offer of God, only God passed between the pieces in Genesis 15:9-21 thus obligating Himself to fulfill His promises without simultaneously and similarly obligating Abraham and the subsequent beneficiaries of the promise.

The Promise and the Law The promise was eternal, Abraham's descendants had to transmit the promise to subsequent generations until the final Seed, even Jesus the Messiah, came. They had to do more. God

expected them to participate personally by faith. Where faith was present, already demands and commands were likewise present. Thus, Abraham obeyed God and left Ur (Genesis 12:1-4 ) and walked before God in a blameless way (Genesis 17:1 ). His obedience to God's "requirements," "commands," "decrees," and "laws" (Genesis 26:5 NIV) was exemplary.

The law extended these demands to the entire life of the people all the while presupposing the earlier promises as the very basis, indeed, as the lever by which such demands could be made (Exodus 2:23-25 ; Exodus 6:2-8 ; Exodus 19:3-8 ; Exodus 20:2 ). The apostle Paul will later ask whether the promises have nullified the law (Romans 3:31 ). He answered, "Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law" (Romans 3:31 NIV).

The Promises and David The monarchy, prematurely founded by the whims of a people who wished to be like the other nations, received a distinctive role through God's promise. A lad taken "from the pasture" (2 Samuel 7:8 NIV) would be given a name equal to "the greatest men of the earth" ( 2 Samuel 7:9 NIV); indeed, his offspring would be seated at God's "right hand" ( Psalm 110:1 ) and inherit the nations (Psalm 2:8 ).

The Promise and the New Covenant The new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 both repeats many of the elements and formulas already contained in the previously announced promise-plan of God and adds several new features. The new promise still contains the law of God, only now it will be internalized. It still pledges that God will be their God, and they will be His people. It still declares that He will forgive their sins and remember them no more. However, it also adds that it will no longer be necessary to teach one's neighbor or brother; for everyone, no matter what their station in life, will know the Lord.

In spite of Israel's future loss of its king, its capital, its Temple, and its former glory, God would fulfill His ancient promises by founding new promises on "the former things [foretold] long ago" (Isaiah 48:3 ). He would send His new David, new Temple, new Elijah, new heavens and new earth—but all in continuity with what He had pledged long ago!

The New Testament Enlarges the Ancient Promises The New Testament promises may be gathered into these groups. The first, and most frequent, are the references to God's promises to Abraham about the heir he was to receive, even Jesus Christ (Romans 4:13-16 ,Romans 4:13-16,4:20 ; Romans 9:7-9 ; Romans 15:8 ; Galatians 3:16-22 ; Galatians 4:23 ; Hebrews 6:13-17 ; Hebrews 7:6 ; Hebrews 11:9 , Hebrews 11:11 ,Hebrews 11:11,11:17 ). A second major grouping may be made around David's seed and the sending of Jesus as "a Savior according to promise" (Acts 13:23 ,Acts 13:23,13:32-33 ; Acts 26:6 ). Perhaps we should connect with this group the gift of "the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:1 NIV), the "promised eternal inheritance" ( Hebrews 9:15 NIV), and the promise which "he has promised us, eternal life" ( 1 John 2:25 NRSV). This promise is "what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ" ( Galatians 3:22 NRSV).

The third major group is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promises appear after our Lord's resurrection (Luke 24:49 ; Acts 2:33 ,Acts 2:33,2:38-39 ).

There are other subjects related to God's promise: rest (Hebrews 4:1 ); the new covenant with its prospect of an eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15 ); the new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13 ); the resurrection (Acts 26:6 ); the blessing of numerous descendants (Hebrews 6:14 ); the emergence of an unshakable kingdom (Hebrews 12:28 ), and Gentiles as recipients of the same promise (Ephesians 2:11-13 ).

The Promise Has Some Notable Differences from Prophecy While much of the promise doctrine is also prophetic in that it relates to the future, there are some notable differences between promise and prophecy. 1. Promises relate to what is good, desirable, and that which blesses and enriches. Prophecy, however, also may contain notes of judgment, destruction, and calamity when people and nations fail to repent. 2. Promises ordinarily implicate the entire human race in their provisions whereas prophecies more typically are aimed at specific nations, cultures, or peoples. 3. Promises deliberately have a continuous fulfillment for generation after generation while prophecies invoke promise when they wish to speak to the distant future. 4. The promise of God is unconditional while most prophecies are conditional and have a suppressed "unless" or "if" you repent attached to their predictions of judgment. Finally, 5. The promise of God embraces many declarations of God ("very great and precious promises," 2 Peter 1:4 ), whereas prophecies are usually directed to more specific events and particular individuals.

The promise-plan of God, then, is indeed His own Word and plan, both in His person and His works, to communicate a blessing to Israel and thereby to bless all the nations of the earth. ([Promise - Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

Undertaking or assurance given to indulge in or refrain from some specific form of activity. Such commitments are made commonly between individuals, and can embrace a wide range of human activity. Simple promises can be both written and oral. They can be temporary in nature or made binding for the indefinite future.

In secular situations the declaration may be sealed by some gesture, such as a simple handshake or a solemn oath; more complicated undertakings may need ratification by witnesses, whether legal officers or not. Specific forms of promise such as the mutual plighting of troth in marriage ceremonies often form part of a religious ritual.

Promises may also be made between groups of people, and because of their greater complexity they frequently necessitate the presence of witnesses. Where important bodies such as governments are involved, such promises generally assume the form of treaties, the provisions of which are accepted as binding on all those participating. Among honest individuals a promise carries with it the expectation that the promisor is both willing and able to fulfill the commitment to the promisee, with the undertaking being accepted by the latter on the basis of good faith.

Should circumstances arise in human society where it becomes evident that the promisor is no longer able to bring the promise to fruition, or that the promise was not made in good faith at the beginning, the promisee has the option of writing off the entire situation and becoming reconciled to whatever loss has been sustained. If this course is not deemed satisfactory, it may be possible for him or her to renegotiate the matter so that at least some portion of the undertaking may be salvaged. A more drastic way of seeking redress would be to apply to the courts for damages because of breach of promise. In interpersonal undertakings, however, such a procedure might be undesirable on a number of grounds, one of which would be the expense involved were the negotiations to be unduly protracted.

Where groups of people are involved, litigation is often resorted to in order to resolve the damage occasioned by the failure of the promisor to fulfill the stated obligations. Where fiscal default is involved, it may be impossible for the promises to be fulfilled, no matter how protracted the litigation may become. In the case of broken international treaties, appeal may be made to an international judicial body for recompense. Under some circumstances, military action might even be undertaken by the aggrieved party, regardless of future consequences. Such intervention could well be pursued in any event if there was evidence of deliberate fraud or bad faith when the commitment was made.

From the foregoing it will appear that promises are to be treated as serious undertakings made between people of good will and solemn intent, in the expectation that the promise will come to fruition as intended by the participants. When the third millennium b.c. Sumerian kings promised the inhabitants of their Mesopotamian city-states that current fiscal and social abuses would be rectified, they furnished evidence of good intent by enacting legislation to resolve the various problems that had arisen. But if the reforming intent was ultimately sabotaged accidentally or deliberately by inefficient or dishonest priestly or civil bureaucrats, the promises remained unfulfilled, even if they had been made under oath to a god. Consequently the credibility of the promisor was impaired, sometimes irreparably, even when he himself was blameless. A situation of this sort would be equally damaging to those persons whose expectations remained unfulfilled.

Agreements between individuals have been recorded in second millennium b.c. Mesopotamia, a classic example being the one between Laban and Jacob (Genesis 31:43-55), when the latter was seeking his independence. What amounted to a covenant was established between them, in which the participants promised not to act aggressively toward one another. Each man swore an oath by his god, and erected a stone marker to solemnize the occasion.

Promises of a prophetic order were also prominent in ancient Mesopotamia, especially where last wills and testaments were concerned. Thus Jacob on his deathbed promised his twelve sons that the future would hold certain prospects for them, and according to contemporary custom this statutory declaration to each one of them gave the pronouncements legal force (Genesis 49:1-33). Subsequent events were to demonstrate how accurately these promises were fulfilled.

Archeological discoveries have revealed the existence of international treaties made between Hittite kings and vassal states. In these documents the great king declares his power and beneficence to former subject states, and promises to protect the current participants in a covenant relationship provided that they keep the terms that are agreed upon under oath. In these contracts mechanisms existed for the punishment of disobedient vassals, who by breaking their promises had in effect nullified the oath of the great Hittite king. But if the covenant conditions were observed by the subject state, the king would fulfill his promises and heap blessings

upon the people.

A promise that was to bring great blessing to humanity was made by God to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3 ), in which the latter, although childless, was to become the progenitor of a great nation. Later this promise was repeated (Genesis 15:5 ), and to his credit Abraham believed God's utterances. The promise was given added credibility by means of a sacrificial ritual (Genesis 15:9-17 ), following which God listed the territories that Abraham's offspring would inhabit. On yet another occasion (Genesis 17:1-27 ) God brought his promise even closer to fulfillment by stating that Sarah would have a son (Genesis 18:10 ), because nothing was too hard for God to accomplish. Thereafter Abraham rested his confidence in this divine power, and lived to see the Lord's assurances implemented in what Paul, millennia later, was to call the "covenants of the promise" (Ephesians 2:12 ; cf. Galatians 3:6-17 ).

God's promises to Abraham's descendants took definite shape in the Sinai covenant (Exodus 19-20,24 ), which resembled a Hittite vassal treaty in form. God, the Great King, promised land and rich blessings to the Israelites if they for their part, would worship him alone as their one true God and live in pagan society as a holy nation, thereby witnessing to God's reality and power. This proposition was ratified in a formal ceremony at Sinai (Exodus 24:3-8 ), and thereafter the sons of Jacob became the chosen people of God.

Coexisting with the promise to Abraham was a more general declaration made by God at the time of the fall (Genesis 3:15 ), and continued in a promise to David (2 Samuel 7:12-13 ) that his seed would continue forever. This messianic utterance still prevailed when, over the centuries, the Israelites became disobedient to God's covenant and ultimately were punished by exile. So desperate was the nation's spiritual condition that Jeremiah promised that God would implement a new, spiritual covenant based upon individual response to him in faith (Jeremiah 31:31-37 ). In the postexilic period the expectation of a Messiah was quickened by prophecy (Malachi 4:5-6 ), and when Jesus began his ministry he was expected by some to behave like a conquering king, liberating his people from Roman oppression and fulfilling ancient expectations.

Christ's kingship, however, was not of this world, as he pointed out to his accusers (John 18:36 ). At his coming he fulfilled the divine promises made to Abraham and David (Luke 1:68 ; Acts 13:23 ). Events occurred just as God had promised, because it was impossible for him to lie (Titus 1:2 ). Although there was an interval of time between the promise and its fulfillment, the delay did not thereby invalidate the promise, any more than it would for a human promise that was fulfilled eventually.

When the new covenant was initiated in the coming of Jesus Christ, it not merely represented the completion of one phase of promise, but in fact commenced a new dispensation, that of grace, which contained its own promises to be fulfilled by God in future times. The rites and ceremonies inherent in the Mosaic covenant had become obsolete with the appearance of our great High Priest, who is the mediator of a new testament (Hebrews 9:11-15 ). Instead, while sharing in all the benefits of Abraham's covenant (Ephesians 3:6 ), the Christian looks forward to a time when the kingdom of God, which was ushered in with the age of grace, will be realized when Christ returns to complete the kingdom of believers and establish it for all eternity before God in heaven.

One important difference between Israel of old and the body of Christ is that the Christian is inspired by the working of the Holy Spirit as a normative part of experience. Before his death, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be given to believers and would guide them along true ways and instruct them in the deep realities of God. The dramatic bestowal of the Spirit upon the Christians at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4 ) fulfilled the Lord's promise, and so possessed the early Christians that they accomplished many deeds of grace by his power.

Paul gave great prominence to the work of the Holy Spirit, teaching that believers were sealed with the promised third person of the Trinity (Ephesians 1:13 ), thus culminating an ancient Hebrew promise (Isaiah 32:15 ; Ezekiel 36:27 ). For the Holy Spirit to be present in a believer guarantees that person's inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22 ), and points to future glorification when the hope of our salvation becomes a reality (Romans 8:23 ). Peter stressed the final promise to Christians, that Jesus will return one day in glory to establish new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:4-13 ). The promises of God find an emphatic "yes" in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:19 ), thus guaranteeing the certainty of the Christian's hope. ([Promise - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

#### **Promise in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia -**

**Promise** holds an important place in the Scriptures and in the development of the religion that culminated in Christ. The Bible is indeed full of "**precious and exceeding great promises**" (2Pet 1:4), although the word "**promise**" is not always used in connection with them. Of the more outstanding promises of the Old Testament



may be mentioned:

(1) the proto-evangelium (Gen 3:15);

(2) the promise to Noah no more to curse the ground, etc. (Gen 8:21,22; 9:1-17);

(3) most influential, the promise to Abraham to make of him a great nation in whom all families of the earth should be blessed, to give to him and his seed the land of Canaan (Gen 12:2,7, etc.), often referred to in the Old Testament (Ex 12:25; Dt 1:8,11; 6:3; 9:28, etc.);

(4) the promise to David to continue his house on the throne (2 Sam 7:12,13,18; 1 Ki 2:24, etc.);

(5) the promise of restoration of Israel, of the Messiah, of the new and everlasting kingdom, of the new covenant and outpouring of the Spirit (Isa 2:2-5; 4:2; 55:5; 66:13; Jer 31:31-34; 32:37-42; 33:14; Ezek 36:22-31; 37:11 f; 39:25 f, etc.).

In the New Testament these promises are founded on, and regarded as having their true fulfillment in, Christ and those who are His (2Cor 1:20; Eph 3:6). The **promise of the Spirit** is spoken of by Jesus as "the promise of my Father" (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4), and this was regarded as fulfilled at Pentecost. The promise of a Saviour of the seed of David is regarded as fulfilled in Christ (Acts 13:23,32, 26:6; Rom 1:2; 4:13; 9:4). Paul argues that the promise to Abraham that he should be "heir of the world," made to him before circumcision, is not confined to Israel, but is open to all who are children of Abraham by faith (Rom 4:13-16; compare Gal 3:16,19,29). In like manner the writer to the Hebrews goes back to the original promises, giving them a spiritual and eternal significance (4:1; 6:17; 11:9, etc.). The New Testament promises include manifold blessings and hopes, among them "life," "eternal life" (1 Tim 4:8; 6:19; 2 Tim 1:1; Jas 1:12), the "kingdom" (Jas 2:5), Christ's "coming" (2 Pet 3:9, etc.), "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet 3:13), etc. For "promise" and "promised" in the King James Version, the Revised Version (British and American) has frequently other terms, as "word" (Ps 105:42), "spake," "spoken" (Dt 10:9; Josh 9:21; 22:4; 23:5,15, etc.), "consented" (Lk 22:6), etc. References to the promises occur repeatedly in the Apocrypha (Baruch 2:34; 2 Macc 2:18; The Wisdom of Solomon 12:21; compare 2 Esdras 3:15; 5:29).

**Regarded** (3049) (**logizomai** from **lógos** = reason, word, account) (Click in depth study on ) means to think about something in a detailed and logical manner. The idea is to draw inferences or conclusions through the use of reason. **Logizomai** is a bookkeeping term which means to make an entry in the account book or to calculate as when figuring an entry in a ledger. The purpose of the entry is to make a permanent record that can be consulted whenever needed.

Even even Abraham Abraham said to God "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!" (Genesis 17:18).

But Ishmael was not God's choice.

**Logizomai** - 40x in 39v -**NAS** = consider(6), considered(2), counted(1), counting(1), credit(1), credited(9), credits(1), dwell(1), maintain(1), numbered(2), propose(1), reason(1), reckoned(2), regard(4), regarded(3), suppose(1), take into account(3), thinks(1).

Luke 22:37; John 11:50; Acts 19:27; Rom 2:3, 26; 3:28; 4:3ff, 8ff, 22ff; 6:11; 8:18, 36; 9:8; 14:14; 1 Cor 4:1; 13:5, 11; 2 Cor 3:5; 5:19; 10:2, 7, 11; 11:5; 12:6; Gal 3:6; Phil 3:13; 4:8; 2 Tim 4:16; Heb 11:19; Jas 2:23; 1 Pet 5:12.