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The Gospel According to Matthew

You Must be Born Again (Part 6)

May 26, 2019

Sermon Text: Matt 15:10-20

Scripture Reading: Romans 4

Mat 15:17-20 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? (18) But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. (19) For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. (20) These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

I am going to show you a largely neglected theme of Scripture which is HUGE! It is everywhere in the Bible

and is a fundamental doctrine of the gospel. This doctrine is called “the Promise” and I can tell you that unless you understand the Promise, you cannot understand the gospel nor can you understand the main theme of the Bible.

As you will see, the Promise is directly related to the subject we have been examining these past few weeks – *you must be born again*.

Now what I have found to be very interesting (and troubling) is that theologians tend to either ignore the Promise, or they rename and re-define it. I am not sure why, except that they either do not understand the Promise, or they want to make it fit into their theological system.

Think about it. Over the years, if you have been raised in the church, over time just how many lessons on the Promise have you heard? Oh you can find long series of sermons and lectures on “the covenant” that go into all kinds of detail about “covenant,”

but try to find such a series on the Promise and you will have a much more difficult time. Usually it is just mentioned in passing.

It is always dangerous to fail to use the Bible's terminology and substitute some other term for it. Often this results in a distortion of not only the name, but of the truth itself.

Alright then, the best way for me to show you that the Promise really is a huge and important theme in the Bible, one that really is actually at the heart of the gospel, is to simply read the Bible passages about the Promise to you. And as you listen, keep in mind what a Promise is and what it entails:

- It is reliant upon the one making the promise to fulfill it
- It concerns the future (once it is fulfilled, it is no longer a promise but a reality)
- To be encouraged by a promise, we must believe the one making the promise.

Act 2:38-39 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (39) For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Act 7:17-18 "But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt (18) until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph.

Act 26:6-7 And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, (7) to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

Rom 4:13-18 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. (14) For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. (15) For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. (16) That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (17) as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. (18) In hope he believed

against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."

Rom 9:8-9 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. (9) For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."

Gal 3:15-29 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. (16) Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

(17) This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. (18) For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

(19) Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an

intermediary. (20) Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

(21) Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. (22) But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

(23) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. (24) So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

(28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Gal 4:21-28 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen

to the law? (22) For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.

(23) But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

(24) Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. (25) Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. (26) But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (27) For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.”

(28) Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Eph 2:11-13 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— (12) remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus

you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Heb 6:13-20 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, (14) saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” (15) And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.

(16) For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. (17) So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, (18) so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

(19) We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, (20) where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Heb 11:8-10 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an

inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

2Pe 3:13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

1Jn 2:25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

Alright, now I read all of those passages so that you can see for yourself that the Promise is an integral part of the gospel, it is at the heart of how God saves us in Jesus Christ. In fact it can be correctly said, that salvation is through faith in the Promise. That's how Abraham was justified. Here it is –

Gen 15:5-6 And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” (6) And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

When the Bible speaks of the Promise, it is always referring back to this Promise made to Abraham and which then becomes clearer to us as the Bible progressively reveals all the aspects of the Promise to us. In other words, Abraham did not have as much insight into all aspects of what God was promising to him and to his Seed as, say, Paul did.

Now, let's make some basic observations about the Promise from these Scriptures:

1. It was originally made to Abraham.
2. Abraham's Seed, his offspring, his heirs, were to be heirs of the promise made to Abraham, their father
3. The Promise involves making the offspring and heirs of Abraham an innumerable company of people.
4. The Promise also involves giving Abraham and his Seed, land. A dwelling place.
5. The Promise includes eternal life and resurrection from the dead
6. The Promise is how God makes sinners righteous, and it is by/through faith
7. The Promise is carried out by God, not by God AND man. That is to say, the Promise is not by works of the Law.

8. The Promise, because it is by faith alone and grace alone, because it is God's doing and not reliant upon the Mosaic Covenant (which was only for Jews) includes all those whom God calls to Himself, both Jew and Gentile because all who are of faith are children and heirs of Abraham, the father of those who believe.
9. The Promise is carried out by Jesus Christ and we become sharers in the Promise by faith in Christ.
10. The Promise includes the *Land*, and that land is the new heavens and new earth. The new creation. It includes eternal life, our resurrection, in that new creation.

So you see it. The Promise is *the gospel*. The Promise is God's Promise that HE would save His people from sin and death and the curse, that HE would redeem all of creation in His Son, Jesus Christ, who is a seed or descendant of Abraham (that is why Matthew and Luke begin with the genealogy of Christ, to show that He is descended from Abraham). When Jesus said "it is finished," He was announcing that God's Promise was fulfilled and now the blessings promised to Abraham would come to all who are his children by faith.

And that is why the Bible has all this talk about *inheritance, and heirs and adoption as sons, and children of God, and so on*.

The Lord made the Promise to Abraham and to the children of Abraham, to Abraham's Seed. That Seed or Offspring is Christ and thus everyone who is *in Christ* is also a child of Abraham and therefore an heir of the Promise.

Now, what has this got to do with our subject: *you must be born again?* Well, the Promise is of faith, not of works. This faith is a gift of God given to those whom He has elected and whom He calls to Himself. And therefore you cannot see the Kingdom of God, you cannot be a member of the Kingdom of God, unless you are born again. Because it is this new birth that makes you a child of Abraham and thus an heir of the Promise. No one will ever see the New Heavens and Earth, no one will ever have eternal life and forgiveness of sins, unless they are recipients of the Promise.

If you are in Christ, the certainty of the Promise is yours. You are an heir according to God's unchangeable Promise. You have an inheritance more glorious than any earthly heir ever possessed.