

Divine Promises

By Mark Mayberry
4/26/2009

Introduction

Hebrews 6:13-20 ... 13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you." 15 And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. 16 For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. 17 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, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (NASB95)

In Biblical usage, a promise is more than a mere assertion; rather, it involves a solemn declaration to do something, a pledge to perform what is promised, with an attendant obligation to accomplish the thing that is offered.

The concept of divine promises is communicated through three related Greek words:

- Thomas defines the root verb *epaggellomai* as a compound of *epi* [on, upon] and *aggellō* [to announce, report], meaning "to proclaim, to promise" [1861]. BDAG say it means "(1) to declare to do something with implication of obligation to carry out what is stated, promise, offer; (a) of human promises and offers; (b) of God; (2) to claim to be well-accomplished in something, profess, lay claim to, give oneself out as an expert in something." This word occurs 15x in the NT (Mark 14:11; Acts 7:5; Rom. 4:21; Gal. 3:19; 1 Tim. 2:10; 6:21; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:13; 10:23; 11:11; 12:26; James 1:12; 2:5; 2 Pet. 2:19; 1 John 2:25).
- Thomas defines the noun *epaggelia* as derived from *epaggellomai*, to mean "a summons, a promise" [1860]. BDAG say it signifies a "declaration to do something with implication of obligation to carry out what is stated, promise, pledge, offer; (a) of humans; (b) in our lit. more generally of divine promises." This word occurs 52x in the NT (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33, 39; 7:17; 13:23, 32; 23:21; 26:6; Rom. 4:13, 14, 16, 20; 9:4, 8, 9; 15:8; 2 Cor. 1:20; 7:1; Gal. 3:14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28; Eph. 1:13; 2:12; 3:6; 6:2; 1 Tim. 4:8; 2 Tim. 1:1; Heb. 4:1; 6:12, 15, 17; 7:6; 8:6; 9:15; 10:36; 11:9, 13, 17, 33, 39; 2 Pet. 3:4, 9; 1 John 2:25).
- Thomas defines the noun *epaggelma* as derived from *epaggellomai*, meaning "a promise" [1862]. This word, occurring 1x in the NT (2 Pet. 3:13), carries the same meaning as above.

Promises to Abraham

God's threefold promise to Abraham – involving land, nation and seed – is a key Biblical concept (Gen. 12:1-7; Acts 7:2-5, 17-18; Rom. 4:13, 14, 16, 20, 21; 9:9; Gal. 3:14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28; Heb. 6:15, 17; 7:6; 11:9, 13, 17).

Genesis 12:1-7 ... 1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." 4 So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. 6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. (NASB95)

*Acts 7:2-5 ... 2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.' 4 "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. 5 "But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He ***promised** that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him. (NASB95)*

*Acts 7:17-18 ... 17 "But as the time of the ***promise** was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, 18 until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. (NASB95)*

*Romans 4:13 ... 13 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. (NASB95)*

*Romans 4:14 ... 14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the ***promise** is nullified; (NASB95)*

*Romans 4:16 ... 16 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, (NASB95)*

*Romans 4:20 ... 20 yet, with respect to the ***promise** of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, (NASB95)*

*Romans 4:21 ... 21 and being fully assured that what God had ***promised**, He was able also to perform. (NASB95)*

*Romans 9:9 ... 9 For this is the word of ***promise**: “At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.” (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:14 ... 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. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:16 ... 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. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:17 ... 17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the ***promise**. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:18 ... 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**. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:19 ... 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the ***promise** had been made. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:21 ... 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. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:22 ... 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. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 3:29 ... 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to ***promise**. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 4:23 ... 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the ***promise**. (NASB95)*

*Galatians 4:28 ... 28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of ***promise**. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 6:15 ... 15 And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the ***promise**. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 6:17 ... 17 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, (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 7:6 ... 6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the ***promises**. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:9 ... 9 By faith he 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; (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:13 ... 13 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. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:17 ... 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the *promises was offering up his only begotten son; (NASB95)*

Promises to David

God promised to raise up One of David's descendants, who would sit upon His throne and establish His kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:11-14; Ps. 89:4; 132:11-12; Acts 13:22-23).

2 Samuel 7:12-16 ... 12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15 but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." ' ' (NASB95)

1 Chronicles 17:11-14 ... 11 "When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 "I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. 14 "But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever." ' ' (NASB95)

Psalm 89:4 ... 4 I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations."Selah. (NASB95)

Psalm 132:11-12 ... 11 The Lord has sworn to David A truth from which He will not turn back: "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. 12 "If your sons will keep My covenant And My testimony which I will teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever." (NASB95)

*Acts 13:22-23 ... 22 "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.' 23 "From the descendants of this man, according to *promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, (NASB95)*

Promises to Israel

God made many promises unto Israel, both Messianic and temporal in nature (Acts 13:32-33; 26:6-7; Rom. 9:3-9; 15:7-9; Heb. 11:32-34, 39-40).

*Acts 13:32-33 ... 32 “And we preach to you the good news of the ***promise** made to the fathers, 33 that God has fulfilled this ***promise** to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You.’ (NASB95)*

*Acts 26:6-7 ... 6 “And now I am standing trial for the hope of the ***promise** made by God to our fathers; 7 the ***promise** to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. (NASB95)*

*Romans 9:3-9 ... 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 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**, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. 6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.” 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. 9 For this is the word of ***promise**: “At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.” (NASB95)*

*Romans 15:7-9 ... 7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. 8 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, 9 and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, “Therefore I will give praise to You among the Gentiles, And I will sing to Your name.” (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:32-34 ... 32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained ***promises**, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:39-40 ... 39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was ***promised**, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. (NASB95)*

Promises to Apostles

Commanding them to remain in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:32-36).

*Luke 24:45-49 ... 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things. 49 "And behold, I am sending forth the ***promise** of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (NASB95)*

*Acts 1:4-8 ... 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had ***promised**, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (NASB95)*

*Acts 2:32-36 ... 32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 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. 34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." ' 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." (NASB95)*

Promises to Christians

God has made various promises to His people during the present era: physical life (Eph. 6:2), spiritual life (Acts 2:38-41; 2 Tim. 1:1), eternal life (1 John 2:25), eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15; James 1:12; 2:5), eternal rest (Heb. 4:1), better things (Heb. 8:6), and last things (Heb. 12:25-29; 2 Pet. 3:3-4; 3:9-13).

*Ephesians 6:1-3 ... 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a ***promise**), 3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. (NASB95)*

*Acts 2:38-41 ... 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized 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 your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." 40 And with many other words he*

solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (NASB95)

2 Timothy 1:1 ... 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the ***promise** of life in Christ Jesus, (NASB95)

1 John 2:25 ... 25 This is the ***promise** which He Himself made to us: eternal life. (NASB95)

Hebrews 9:15 ... 15 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 may receive the ***promise** of the eternal inheritance. (NASB95)

James 1:12 ... 12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has ***promised** to those who love Him. (NASB95)

James 2:5 ... 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He ***promised** to those who love Him? (NASB95)

Hebrews 4:1 ... 1 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. (NASB95)

Hebrews 8:6 ... 6 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**. (NASB95)

Hebrews 12:25-29 ... 25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has ***promised**, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." 27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be

shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire. (NASB95)

*2 Peter 3:3-4 ... 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the ***promise** of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” (NASB95)*

*2 Peter 3:9-13 ... 9 The Lord is not slow about His ***promise**, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His ***promise** we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. (NASB95)*

Conclusion

Sinful men share not in the promises of God (Eph. 2:11-13). They make promises that appeal to fleshly desire (Mark 14:10-11). They make promises they cannot deliver (2 Pet. 2:18-19).

*Ephesians 2:11-13 ... 11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands— 12 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. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (NASB95)*

*Mark 14:10-11 ... 10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. 11 They were glad when they heard this, and ***promised** to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time. (NASB95)*

*Mark 14:11 ... 11 They were glad when they heard this, and ***promised** to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time. (NASB95)*

*2 Peter 2:18-19 ... 18 For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 19 ***promising** them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. (NASB95)*

Divine promises encompass the entire Godhead, being connected not only with the Father, but also with the Son (Eph. 3:6) and the Spirit (Eph. 1:13). They are entirely reliable, being rooted in

the character of God (2 Cor. 1:20; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:13; 10:23; 11:11). They require cleansing (2 Cor. 7:1), godliness (1 Tim. 4:8), and endurance (Heb. 6:12; 10:36).

*Ephesians 3:6 ... 6 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, (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 1:13 ... 13 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**, (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 1:20 ... 20 For as many as are the ***promises** of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. (NASB95)*

*Titus 1:2 ... 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, ***promised** long ages ago, (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 6:13 ... 13 For when God made the ***promise** to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 10:23 ... 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who ***promised** is faithful; (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:11 ... 11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had ***promised**. (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 7:1 ... 1 Therefore, having these ***promises**, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (NASB95)*

*1 Timothy 4:8 ... 8 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. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 6:12 ... 12 so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the ***promises**. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 10:36 ... 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was ***promised**. (NASB95)*