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## Doctrine and Duty.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

PROPHETIC ORACLES, No. II.

### THE PROMISES TO ABRAHAM.

The Bible opens up to us the great plan of salvation by the Messiah—the way of pardon and of reconciliation for sinners of mankind. It holds forth also the prospect of a time when the world shall be restored from the disastrous effects of the curse, and a reign of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost shall ensue.

The first intimation of these things is the first prophecy, (Gen. iii. 15,) which foreshows the destruction of the devil and his works. The next intimation was the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, which existed only as a tradition, until an inspired apostle recorded it; and it thus became a portion of the sure word of prophecy. Next to this we have the covenant made with Abraham, while he yet dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, amplified at various important epochs in his history, and renewed after he slept in the cave of Macpelah, to Isaac and to Jacob.

This covenant was made with Abraham when God first called him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house; again the Lord appeared unto him at Moreh; again, after his separation from Lot; again, when God took him out beneath the starry canopy, and shewed that though as yet he had no son, yet should his seed be as these innumerable stars for multitude; and on the same day, after the sacrifice of the divided heifer and the she goat, and of the birds, when a deep sleep fell upon Abraham, and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him; and yet again, when Abraham was ninety years old and nine, and God changed his name from Abram to Abraham; and last of all, God renewed this covenant on mount Moriah, after that most touching event when God so mercifully interposed, taking the yvill for the deed, and accepting the ram for the son, the only son Isaac—then the angel of the Lord called out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Gen. xii. 1—3: 7: xiii. 14—16: xv: 17: xx. 13—18.

What was the covenant thus made with Abra-

ham? Was it a legal or national covenant? No: it was the New Covenant, the Covenant with Promise; the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, and the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect—the inheritance is not of the law, but of promise. Gal. iii. 14—16. The instrument was, as it were, drawn up, sealed, and signed, in the days of Abraham, though not published and carried into effect until after the death of the Testator. Heb. ix. 17, 18. The covenant made with Abraham is that very covenant of grace, under which we live; and is carefully to be distinguished from the national covenant made with the Israelites at Sinai.

In the covenant we have three things—1. the seed. 2. the inheritance. 3. the blessing.

1. The seed. This primarily refers to Isaac the child of promise. But a greater than Isaac is here. When God appeared to Isaac himself at Gerar, he renewed to him the very promise which he here makes to Abraham: and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed. Gen. xxvi. 4. And yet again the same promise is given to Jacob at Bethel—thus pointing the faith of God's people forward to the woman's seed, and the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to the Messiah that was to come, and that seed is Christ. Gal. iii. 16. Isaac was a pledge that in Abraham's seed all nations shall be blessed. In Isaac God established his promise. The birth of Isaac was a token that in God's set time, Immanuel should be born. But Christ, and not Isaac, is emphatically the seed in which all the nations are to be blessed.

But God in this covenant speaks not only of a seed, which is Christ, but also of seeds, like the stars of heaven, and the sand upon the sea shore, and the covenant is established with Abraham and his seed after him in their generations. Gen. xvii. 7. This evidently refers to the natural posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And moreover, the apostle teacheth us that all who are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gen. iii. 29.

Thus we find that where the promise speaks as of one, that the seed is Christ; and where it speaks as of many, the reference is to Abraham's posterity, and to all who are mystically members of Christ.

II. The Inheritance. This inheritance is more fully described in chap. xv. 15 to the end. The inheritance is Palestine in its fullest extent. Who are the parties who shall inherit this land? First of all this promise is given to Abraham personally and individually, I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a

stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. Gen. xvii. 8; chap. xii. 14, 15; xv. 7.

Next it is given to Isaac: unto thee and unto thy seed I will give all these countries. xxvi. 3. Next, and in like manner, to Jacob, when Jehovah spoke to him from the top of the ladder, at Padan Aram. xxviii. 13. Notice in each the careful repetition of the words "to thee," in connection with the seed. Thus did Jehovah establish his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, to give them the land of their pilgrimage. (Exod. vi. 3, 4.

Again it is promised to the seed of these patriarchs in its full extent, and as an everlasting possession.

Lastly, this promise has respect to Christ, who is permanently Abraham's seed; hence Palestine is called Immanuel's land. Isaiah viii. 8.

Has this promise then ever been fulfilled? We think not. The inheritance is still to be possessed. It is true that the Israelites under Joshua, did get possession of a large portion of Palestine. But notice that in this case Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not inherit the land personally; and even their posterity never possessed it in all its extent, as promised to Abraham. Moreover, it has not yet been given to them for an everlasting possession, for they are now driven out of it, and dispersed. We look therefore for a future fulfilment of this promise, to which the possession of Canaan under Joshua bears the same relation as Isaac bears to Christ—it is a token and pledge of the future and complete fulfilment of the promise of the inheritance.

The Patriarchs are invariably spoken of as having been only pilgrims and strangers, without inheritance in Canaan. How touchingly Stephen brings out this truth! "He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him." Acts vii. 3. That the Patriarchs themselves looked forward to the fulfilment of that promise, we learn from the words of the apostle Paul, where he tells us that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all died in faith, not having received the promises; but having seen them afar off they were persuaded of them. Heb. xi. 13. The same apostle when he pleaded before Agrippa, said, "And now I stand and am judged by the law for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake King Agrippa I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Acts xxvi. 6—8. In this