The Land Promise in Scripture

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The promises of the Abrahamic covenant are often summarized under the headings of land, seed, and blessing. In finding the relevance of this covenant to ourselves in the present, we often know what to do with seed and blessing. We know from the New Testament that the Seed is ultimately Christ (Gal. 3:16). Genesis 12 says that Abraham would mediate blessing to all the families of the earth, and we see this fulfilled in salvation through Christ. Christ is the Seed of Abraham, and Jews, also the seed of Abraham, brought the gospel to the Gentiles.

But the relevance of the land promise is not so clear. At first read the New Testament seems to say little regarding the land promise. In addition, the promise of land does not sound spiritual. Nonetheless the land promise is one of the central promises of a foundational covenant. Its significance cannot be dismissed.

Land in Progressive Covenantalism

There are a number of ways theologians have developed the land promise theme in Scripture. Some interpreters claim that the land theme has been spiritualized, often saying that Christ replaces the land.[1] Others claim that the land promise has been universalized to encompass the entire creation in such a way that the specific promises to Israel are relativized or superseded.[2]

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* Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

[1] Dale Allison writes, "Christ's ubiquity as a spiritual presence universalizes the notion of holy space and so inescapably relativizes the sanctity and significance of the land promised to Abraham's descendants." D. C. Allison, Jr., "Land in Early Christianity," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 644. Peter Walker claims, "We can already see at least four different New Testament analogues for the land: heaven, the world, Christ himself and Christian fellowship. A creative biblical theology will have room for each where it is appropriate, and will not force the biblical material into one channel to the exclusion of others." Peter W. L. Walker. "The Land and Jesus Himself," in *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 117-18. Christopher Wright summarizes his viewpoint: "So then by incorporation into the Messiah, all nations are enabled to enter upon the privileges and responsibilities of God's people. Christ himself takes over the significance and function of the land kinship qualification. 'In Christ,' answering to 'in the land,' denotes a status and a relationship, a position of inclusion and security, a privilege with attendant responsibilities. This is the *typological* understanding which was referred to briefly in the Introduction. But what then has become of the socio-economic dimension of the land which we found to have been of such importance in Old Testament Israel? Has it simply been transcended, as spiritualized and forgotten? By no means . . . The oneness of believers in Christ and their shared experience of Christ is no mere abstract 'spiritual' concept. On the contrary, it has far-reaching practical implications in the social *and* economic realms, both of which are included in the New Testament understanding and practice of 'fellowship.'" Christopher J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 111-12.

[2] David Holwerda comments, "[T]he horizons of the land have been shaped by the revelation of Jesus Christ. His previous Jewish focus on a particularistic fulfillment has been transformed into a Christian universalism focused on the new creation. Just as in Christ the temple had become a universal dwelling place and the seed of Abraham had been transformed into a universal people, so the promise of the land already embraces the world." David E. Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 104. Thus, "[O]ne may conclude that the original land of Canaan and the city of Jerusalem were only an anticipatory fulfillment of God's promise. As such they function in Scripture as a sign of the future universal city on the renewed earth, the place where righteousness dwells." Ibid., 112. N. T. Wright argues, ""Jesus seems to have said and done remarkably little on the subject of the Land. As we saw in the previous chapter, what he did say served to undermine adherence to land as a major symbol within the Jewish

Peter Gentry, Stephen Wellum, and Oren Martin align Progressive Covenantalism with the latter view, and they reject interpretations that spiritualize the land.[3]

Foundational to the Progressive Covenantal view of the land is the belief that the land and the land promise in the Old Testament serve as a type of the new creation. Wellum writes:

> [W]e will argue in our exposition of the biblical covenants, the Old Testament text does present the land and the nation as types and patterns of something greater. From the covenant of creation with Adam, Eden is presented as the archetype, which the 'land' later on looks back to and forward to in anticipation of the recovery of the new creation. Furthermore, Adam as a covenant head is typological of the 'last Adam' to come, and as we move across the covenants, Adam and the land is developed in terms of Noah, Abraham and his seed, the nation of Israel and her land, and ultimately in the Davidic King who will rule the entire creation."[4]

In this view the typological nature of the land promise disassociates future fulfillment from the nation of Israel. Martin writes:

> The Promised Land in the Old Testament—when situated within the kingdom and covenantal framework of Scripture as it progressively unfolds—was designed by God to serve as a type or pattern of a greater future reality. . . . Therefore the promise of land to the nation of Israel is understood within the broader context of God's programmatic agenda that begins with Adam, progresses from Abraham to Israel, and culminates in an international community living in a new creation. In other words, the national dimension involving the geographical territory of Israel should be viewed as a transitional stage in the outworking of God's redemptive plan, a plan that spans from creation to new creation and ultimately includes people from every nation filling the entire earth.[5]

Related to its typological view of the land, Progressive Covenantalism understands national Israel as a type of Christ and of the new covenant people of God. Martin notes that in 1 Peter the church is "identified with the Israel of God" (2:9).[6] Wellum comments, "Israel as a people serves a number of purposes in God's plan. It is a physical nation that is the means by which God brings about his promises; it is typological of a greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; and within it the true people of God are found . . . , yet it also anticipates, through Christ, the church."[7]

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worldview. He moved freely—and announced the kingdom—not only within Galilee but within the largely gentile Decapolis. . . . He seems to have been well aware of the geographical symbolism of Jerusalem, not least in its relation to Galilee; but, as far as he was concerned, one of the main significances of Jerusalem was that it was the city where prophets were killed. His sense of location corresponded, it seems, to his sense of identity and, as we shall see, of timing and purpose. He had not come to rehabilitate the symbol of holy land, but to subsume it within a different fulfilment of the kingdom, which would embrace the whole creation—from which, of course, he drew continually in the narratives and imagery of his teaching and announcement.' N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: SPCK, 1996), 446. O. Palmer Robertson holds that the land in the old covenant was the shadow of the new covenant reality of the world earth as the promised land. Thus the land promise is not to be connected to ethnic or national Israel. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2000), 25, 31, 38.

[3] See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015); Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville: B&H, 2016).

[4] Gentry and Wellum, 124; cf. 707-13; Martin, 118-19. For the promise itself being identified as a type, see Wellum and Gentry, 633-34.

[5] Martin, 115; cf. 169-70.

[6] Ibid., 149.

[7] Gentry and Wellum, 646. Wellum rejects covenant theology's equation of the church and Israel. He notes that there are "redemptive-historical and covenantal differences," and he denies that they "are the same kind of covenant

This typology is tied to an understanding of the covenants in which the "new covenant supersedes all the previous covenants in redemptive-history."[8] On their view the new covenant in the New Testament "is applied to Christ and the church" rather than being "viewed as both national . . . and international," as it was in the Old Testament.[9]

Progressive Covenantalists also address an obvious counter-argument, namely, that the land promise is part of an unconditional promise. They argue that the claim that some covenants are conditional while others are unconditional "is not quite right" since all covenants have both conditional and unconditional elements to them.[10] Wellum states, "There is a sense in which we agree with Michael Horton that Israel forfeited the promise of the land because of her disobedience, hence the reason for the exile."[11] In another sense, however, Jesus as the "greater than Israel" will bring the land promise to pass in the new creation as a whole.[12]

The main point of Progressive Covenantalism's theology of the land is that the promised land is not limited to the boundaries given to Abraham and Israel.[13] Martin in particular argues that Matthew 5:5; 19:27-28; Romans 4:13; 8:18-25; Ephesians 6:2-3 all universalize the land promise and that they do so on the basis of Old Testament texts (Gen. 22:17; Ps. 37:11; Isa. 61:1-2, 7) that were already pointing toward the universalization of the promise.[14]

In making this point Progressive Covenantalists tie together a variety of theological themes: (1) Eden as a primeval sanctuary, (2) the temple, (3) the new creation as a restoration of Eden, (4) rest, and (5) the kingdom of God. The logic works like this: if the land promise is tied back to restoring what was lost in Eden, and if Eden was a primeval temple, and if the new creation is viewed in terms of temple symbolism, then the land should be viewed as coterminous with the new creation.[15] Similarly, if the land is tied to the kingdom theme and the realm of the kingdom is the new earth, then the land promise encompasses the entire new earth.[16]

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communities." Ibid., 646. His main point is that Israel included both believers and unbelievers "while the church is a *regenerate* community." Ibid. Wellum also distinguishes his view from dispensational theology: "One cannot separate Israel and the church too much, i.e., ontologically as much of dispensationalism does." Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 604

[9] Ibid., 645-46.

[10] Ibid., 609; cf. 120-21, 610, 634, 705.

[11] Ibid., 706.

[12] Ibid., 706; cf. Martin, 164.

[13] Martin notes, "Specific geographical boundary markers are given in a number of texts, and the extent of the Promised Land is not identical in each (e.g., the boundaries in Deut. 11:24 are significantly broader than those in Num. 34)." He believes that this reinforces the point that the promised land is not bounded in its ultimate fulfillment. Ibid., 73. This claim will not be addressed in the body of the paper, but the resolution is simple and may be noted here. The major difference between Deuteronomy 11:24 and Numbers 34 is the presence of the tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan. The Transjordan part of Israel was not part of the original promise. In fact, Numbers 34 is recounting a special request for certain tribes to be given this land despite it not being part of the original promise. Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 606. To conclude from this special request that the "boundary markers" are "not identical" in the various texts seems to be sloppy interpretation. In any event, is quite a leap to reason from the addition of the Transjordan to the boundaries promised to the conclusion that boundaries of Israel are so flexible as to be non-existent. Progressive Covenantalists have some good arguments for their position, but this is not one of them.

[14] Martin, 125-26, 134-35, 137; cf. 96.

[15] Gentry and Wellum, 481, cf. 213-17, 709-13; Martin, 17-18, 155

[16] Ibid., 137. Wellum seems to reason from the kingdom differently than Martin. He appeals to D. A. Carson: "'Kingdom' no longer primarily conjures up a theocratic state in which God rules by his human vassal in the Davidic dynasty. It conjures up the immediate transforming reign of God. . . . The locus of the people of God is no longer national and tribal; it is international, transracial, transcultural." D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 254, cited in Gentry and Wellum, 598.

The connection with the rest theme works somewhat differently: rest in the land serves as a type of eschatological rest. Since this eschatological rest is fulfilled in the new creation, the land promise is not confined to Canaan but extends to the entire new creation.[17]

Evaluation

This paper proposes that Progressive Covenantalists are correct to see the land theme in Scripture as rooted in Eden, intertwined with the temple, kingdom, and rest themes and culminating in the new creation,[18] but wrong to think that the expansion of the land promise beyond the borders and people of Israel entails a denial that redeemed ethnic Israelites will receive the land promised to them in the future.

The Significance of the Physical World

Progressive Covenantalists are commendable in their affirmation of the importance of the physical world. Those who spiritualize the land promise fall prey to what Robert Saucy calls "the common view that the Old Testament deals with material and earthly realities while the New Testament deals with higher, spiritual matters."[19] Against this "common view" Paul places the bodily resurrection at the heart of the gospel: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

Redemption involves reversing sin and its effects, with death as the chief consequence of sin. Thus the redeemed are given life in the inner man: "and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:26). But life in the inner man alone is not the conquest of death. Christ conquers death in the outer man as well: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).[20] At the heart of the gospel is something physical, the resurrection body.

Sin also affected the physical creation in the cursing of the creation blessing. Attending the seed blessing is pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16) and the blessing of dominion over the land is frustrated (Gen. 3:17-19). Paul notes that "the creation was subjected to futility," a reference to the curse.[21] Furthermore, Paul connects the

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[17] Martin, 143.

[18] I recognize that the new creation has begun now in Christ, but in this paper it is most often used of the new earth.

[19] Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 242.

[20] As is often the case in John's Gospel Jesus is recorded as using the same words with subtlety different meanings. In verse 25 Jesus uses life to refer to resurrection life. So even the one who's body is buried, if he is a believer, will live despite his death. He will be resurrected. But in verse 26 Jesus speaks of one who lives and believes never dying. Here "lives" is probably referring to eternal life. John it is clear that eternal life is not something that believers will get in the future; it is something that believers have now. So Jesus is saying that even if the outer man dies, the believer will live in the outer man again since Jesus is the resurrection. But more than that, the believer already has eternal life in the inner man and he will never die in the inner man. (The language of inner man/outer man comes from 2 Corinthians 4:16.) See Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966),434; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 412-11. Genesis 3:19 records the pronouncement of the coming death of the outer man. Genesis 3:7-13 records the effects of the death of the inner man: shame (3:7), separation from God (3:8), failure to love others as one's self (3:12). Of course, standing over the entire sin is the failure to love God.

[21] Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans* (1864; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1986), 271-72; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans,* New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 1:303-4; Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 515-16; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary

creation waiting for freedom "from its bondage to corruption" to "the redemption of our bodies," a reference to the resurrection (Rom. 8:19-23).[22] The reversal of the curse on creation, therefore, is an important part of redemption.[23]

Given the tight relationship between redemption and the material creation, Saucy is certainly correct when he rejects "the common hermeneutical tendency to see statements dealing with material things as symbolically depicting New Testament spiritual realities."[24] Progressive Covenantalists are in line with Saucy here. Martin writes:

> Jesus taught his disciples to pray that God's (heavenly) kingdom would come to earth (Matt. 6:9-10). The hope for Jesus's followers, then, is not an ethereal, non-physical existence, but the consummation of spiritual realities coming into effect on the earth. Likewise, in Matthew 19 the future place of Jesus' disciples is not described as a destruction of the earth or a spiritual, non-physical kingdom, but a *palingenesia*, a new world (19:28). Thus the earth has a territorial connotation and the Beatitudes an eschatological dimension. When put together, Matthew describes an eschatological reborn earth for those in the kingdom. Amazingly, the 'blessed' in Matthew will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5)—the kingdom of heaven (vv. 3, 10)—and though they mourn in the present, they will reign with Christ in the new earth.[25]

This point of agreement is significant, for it forms the foundation for a commonality of viewpoint and the possibility for rapprochement that would not be possible if the land promise were spiritualized.

Land and Eden

Wellum observes, "The 'land' promise of the Abrahamic covenant must also be understood in terms of what preceded it, namely, the covenant of creation. When this is done, there is further biblical warrant to view the 'land' as a type or pattern of the entire creation."[26] Leaving typology aside for the moment, the connection between Eden and the land promise in the Abrahamic covenant is a strong connection.

All three of the summary categories of the Abrahamic covenant are found in Genesis 1:26-28:

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on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 436; contra C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 183-84.

[22] Hodge, 276; Murray, 300, 308; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1:419.

[23] See further Jan Veenhof, *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck*, trans. Albert M. Wolters (Souix Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2006), 17-18; Thomas Oden, *John Wesley's Teachings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 1:39; 2:303.

[24] Saucy, 242.

[25] Martin, 126. Martin not only argues that for the importance of a physical new creation, he seems to lean against the annihilation of the present creation: "Some scholars have drawn the conclusion from 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12 that the present creation will be completely annihilated. . . . Barber and Peterson (2012: 37-38), however, argue that this view should be rejected for several reasons. First, such an interpretation contradicts Paul (Rom. 8:20-21) and John (Rev. 22:3), who speak of the removal of the curse, not the extinction and recreation of God's world. Secondly, Romans 8:22-23 presents humanity and creation not as annihilated, but as cleansed of sin and transformed. Thirdly, 2 Peter 3:6 says that 'the world that then existed [during the flood] was deluged with water and perished.' Perished does not speak of a literal destruction but of its cleansing through the judgment of unbelievers. In the same way, the language of burning does not entail complete destruction, but of purifying the earth by removing all wickedness. [This particular argument is faulty since the Flood did bring destruction; all that is needed is to argue that the Flood did not annihilate the earth and the future fire will not either.] Fourthly, Peter compares the destiny of the earth and of unbelievers (3:7). The destruction of the ungodly does not mean their annihilation. Rather, it means their eternal conscious punishment (Matt. 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:5-9; Rev. 20:10-15). Finally, Peter's concern is with the purifying of sinners for the new creation, resulting in new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells (3:13)." Ibid., 151, n. 67.

[26] Gentry and Wellum, 709.

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This passage recounts God's first stated blessing of man: "And God blessed them." The blessing focuses on seed and land/dominion. The first blessing, that mankind would "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," is tied to the seed promise. The blessing then turns to land/dominion: "fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

God's intended land/dominion blessing was never limited to the garden. God intended for man to "fill the earth" (1:28). Genesis 2, which is largely a development of the blessing, seed, land/dominion themes introduced in 1:28,[27] looks to beyond the garden in verses 10-14. The river that provided water for garden (2:6, 10) also provides the highways into the lands beyond Eden.[28] Yet when Adam and Eve leave the garden it is not to extend good and wise dominion over the earth. Instead they find themselves exiled from the garden (3:23-24). This begins an exile theme in Scripture.

These three themes of blessing, seed, and land also appear in the Fall narrative. In Genesis 3 Adam's sin results in a curse rather than a blessing. Fittingly, the curse focuses on seed (pain in childbearing; 3:16) and dominion over the earth (3:17-19). Adam's role as the cultivator of the ground is reaffirmed (see also 3:23). But the ground now resists human dominion.[29] It is painful to work the ground, and the ground produces thorns and thistles along with food. And in the end it seems as though the ground will have dominion over the man because the man returns to the dust of which he was created.[30]

These three themes also occur in the Flood narrative and in the Noahic covenant. Land words occur in Genesis 7 at a higher percentage per verse than in any other chapter in Genesis.[31] In both chapters 7 and 8 land is at the center of the problem. instead of being filled with humans as God intended (1:28), the earth is

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[27] The first part of the chapter centers on exercising dominion over the earth, the last part centers on the wife necessary for man to be fruitful and multiply, and embedded in the middle are the trees that will test man to see whether he will receive blessing or cursing.

[28] This river is uniquely suited for transporting people to lands beyond the garden. All other rivers grow larger as tributaries flow into it. But this river is a unity as it flows into the garden from Eden, and it divides in the garden into four rivers that flow out into various lands. In addition, these lands have other resources that that humans will harness that will extend their dominion beyond gardening. Kidner notes, "There is a hint of the cultural development intended for man when the narrative momentarily (10-14) breaks out of Eden to open up a vista into a world of diverse countries and resources. The digression, overstepping the bare details that locate the garden, discloses that there is more than primitive simplicity in store for the race: a complexity of unequally distributed skills and peoples, even if the reader knows the irony of it in the tragic connotations of the words 'gold,' 'Assyria,' 'Euphrates.'" Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1967), 61. I am indebted to a May 2012 conversation with Bryan Smith for the idea that the rivers served as .highways into the rest of the world.

[29] "The ground will now be his enemy rather than his servant." Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26,* New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 252. Leupold speaks of the "insubordination" of the ground. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis,* (1942; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 1:173; cf. Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 95.

[30] "Once again the judgment is related to the offense. Mankind had been given dominion over the creation when Adam and Eve were first formed. But now the ground claims victory—it brings mankind into ultimate subjection." John D. Currid, *Genesis*, An EP Study Commentary (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2003), 1:136.

[31] In terms of straight number of occurrences, only Genesis 1, 41, 47 exceed chapter 7.

filled with violence.[32] This violence corrupts the earth, just as Cain polluted the ground with the blood of Abel.[33] When God makes his covenant with Noah, he reiterates the creation blessing of Genesis 1:28, though in the context of the Fall.[34] The nature of the Noahic covenant is to set bounds on the curse so that God's plan of redemption can be worked out in the world. The culmination of the redemption made possible by the Noahic covenant is the removal of the curse.[35] In this way Noah plays a significant role in God's plan to bring the earth relief from the curse. Land plays an important role in the Noahic covenant. This is clear when God's purposes (8:21-22) are enshrined in the covenant (9:8-17). The heart of the covenant is that God will never again destroy the earth with a flood.[36]

Thus when we come to the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, there should be little surprise that land has a prominent place alongside seed and blessing in these promises. Land was part of God's initial blessing to mankind, land was affected by the Fall, and land was the focal point of the Noahic covenant. Nor, given this background, should it surprise us if as the Scripture unfolds this theme the promise has a significance that broadens out beyond Israel to encompass all of God's people and all of creation.

On the connection of the land promise with Eden, and on the implications of that connection for the expansion of the land promise, there is no disagreement.

Land and Temple

Adam's sin had three major effects: (1) death in the inner and outer man, (2) the cursing of the creation blessing, and (3) the exile of mankind from Eden, the place of God's presence. The last of these three judgments connects the land theme to the temple theme. Exile, an aspect of the land theme, is connected to removal from God's presence, an aspect of the temple theme.

Wellum presents this argument in full:

> [T]hink of the theme of the garden of Eden as a temple sanctuary. . . . [Greg] Beale convincingly demonstrates that the land of Eden is presented as the archetypal temple, the place where God uniquely dwelt with Adam and Eve as they served God as priest-kings and sons in obedient devotion and worship of God. Adam and Eve's task was to subdue and rule over the entire earth, which suggests that they were 'to extend the geographical boundaries of the garden until Eden covered the whole earth,' which, as Psalm 8 makes clear, was a role that the entire human race was to carry out. . . . [W]hat is significant for our purposes is the close connection between land and temple, and how Eden serves as the archetype which both the land of Israel and the later tabernacle/temple are patterned after.
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> When we combine all of these points and set the land promise in the context of creation, we have biblical warrant to view the 'land' as a type and pattern of creation. In this reading, the archetype is the land of Eden, whose borders are to be extended to the entire creation.[37]

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[32] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, World Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard (Nashville: Nelson, 1987), 1:171. If this violence included murders, as is likely, then we see a direct opposition to the command to multiply humanity on the earth.

[33] Mathews, 1:159-60.

[34] Verse 1 of chapter 9 is an exact quote of 1:28a except for the alteration of the persons to whom God is speaking. Verse 7 of chapter 9 is similar to 1:28a except for the replacement of וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ ("and fill the earth") with שִׁרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ ("swarm on the earth"). The word שׁרץ is used in Genesis 1:20, 21 of living creatures that swarmed in the waters and in 7:21 of creatures that swarm on the land.

[35] In this way the Noahic covenant may fulfill the prophecy of Genesis 5:29.

[36] Great emphasis is placed on the earth in this passage. Animals are identified as being "of the earth" or "on the earth." The covenant is even said to be made with the earth itself (9:13).

[37] Gentry and Wellum, 710-11.

Martin makes this the thesis of his book:

> The aim of the present study is to demonstrate that the land promised to Abraham advances the place of the kingdom that was lost in Eden and serves as a type throughout Israel's history that anticipates the even greater land—prepared for all of God's people throughout history—that will come as a result of the person and work of Christ. in other words, the land and its blessings find their fulfillment in the new heaven and new earth won by Christ.[38]

He also draws a tight connection between temple and the new creation by following G. K. Beale in identifying the New Jerusalem, spoken of in Revelation in temple terminology, with the entire new creation:

> Instead of the temple being the exclusive place of God's presence, John declares that the entire 'paradisal city-temple of Revelation 21:1-22:5 encompasses the entirety of the newly created earth.' The most evident sign of this city-temple is its perfectly cubic shape (21:16). This glorious description is like no other previous place on earth, but is more akin to the holy of holies (1 Kgs 6:20). Thus the new earth now serves as the place of God's presence.[39]

Leaving aside the issue of typology, which will be examined below, the Progressive Covenantalist formulations on the connection between Eden, land, temple, and new creation must receive a mixed verdict.

Excursus on Eden as a Temple

Though the bearing on their argument is not great, G. K. Beale's increasingly popular contention that Eden was an archetypal temple ought to be challenged.[40] Beale's argument for an Edenic temple (adopted by Wellum, Gentry, and Martin) can be summarized from the following headings: (1) "The Garden as the unique place of God's presence," (2) "The Garden as the place of the first priest," (3) "The Garden as the place of the first guarding cherubim," (4) "The Garden as the place of the first arboreal lampstand," (5) "The Garden as formative for garden imagery in Israel's temple," (6) "Eden as the first source of water," (7) "Eden as the place of precious stones," (8) "The Garden as the place of the first mountain," (8) "The Garden as the first place of wisdom," (9) "The Garden as part of a tripartite sacred structure," (10) "Ezekiel's view of the Garden of Eden as the first sanctuary."[41]

In response:

(1) The presence of God is the chief actual parallel. But to argue that God's presence in Eden makes Eden a temple is to mistake the reality for the symbol. The temple is needed as a symbol of God's presence because the reality of God's presence has been withdrawn due to sin. When the reality is fully restored, then the need for the symbol passes away (Rev. 21:22). Indeed, even in the present the symbol has passed due to the reality (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22).

(2) Beale concludes from the occurrence of עבד and שׁמר in Genesis 2:10 that Adam is pictured as a priest since when these words "occur together in the Old Testament . . . , they refer either to Israelites 'serving' God and 'guarding [keeping]' God's word . . . or to priests who 'keep' the 'service' (or 'charge') of the tabernacle (see Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14)."[42] However, this is a decontextualized reading of these terms. Beale concedes, "It is true that the Hebrew word usually translated 'cultivate' can refer to an agricultural

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[38] Martin, 17.
[39] Ibid., 155, citing G. K. Beale, "Revelation (book)," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 358
[40] T. Desmond Alexander, John Walton, and Gordon Wenham are also proponents of this view.
[41] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God,* New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 66-75. Beale's last two headings in this section are "The Ancient Near Eastern concept of temples in association with garden-like features" and "Early Judaism's view of the garden as the first sanctuary." Ibid., 76-77.
[42] Ibid., 67; cf. 69.

task when used by itself (e.g., 2:5; 3:23)."[43] In the context of Adam being placed in a garden because the garden needed a man for certain kinds of plants to grow (2:5), it is contextually more likely that these words refer to "an agricultural task." Daniel Block rightly observes, "Lacking other clear signals it is inappropriate to read back into this collocation cultic significance from later texts (e.g., Nm 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6). The conjunction of verbs עבד . . . and שׁמר . . . in association with the tabernacle suggests that priestly functions were reminiscent of humankind's role in the garden, but the reverse is unwarranted."[44]

(3) Since the cherubim are placed to guard the garden only after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, their presence on the tabernacle curtains is probably an indication that the way to God is still barred for sinful humans rather than an indication that Eden was a temple.

(4, 5, 6) While it may be true that the lampstand symbolized the tree of life,[45] and while the lampstand and other parts of the tabernacle make use of garden imagery, this only demonstrates that the tabernacle and temple looked back to Eden. It does not demonstrate that Eden was a temple. Likewise with prophetic promise that a river will flow from the temple. Again, this confuses the reality and the symbol.[46]

(7) Beale says that the Garden is "the place of precious stones," but the text places the stones outside of Eden in the land of Havilah. Rather than a temple connection, it is contextually more likely that a connection exists back to Genesis 1:28 and the blessing of human rule over the earth. The rivers are highways into the wider world and in those lands are natural resources to be harnessed, such a gold, a standard medium of exchange.[47]

(8) Block says on this score, "As noted earlier, while the HB [Hebrew Bible] never associates wisdom with the priesthood, its significance for kingship is explicitly declared in Prv 8:12-21 (especially vv. 15-16). . . . To associate the wisdom motif with the law stored inside the Holy of Holies and eating the forbidden fruit with touching the ark is farfetched and anachronistic."[48]

(9) Beale's attempt to connect the structure of the Garden with the structure of the tabernacle falters on the fact that the river does not flow from a holy of holies within the garden but from the broader land of Eden in which the garden is placed (Gen. 3:10).[49]

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[43] Ibid., 67. He also says, "While it is likely that a large part of Adam's task was to 'cultivate' and be a gardener as well as 'guarding' the garden, that all of his activities are to be understood primarily as priestly activity is suggested not only from the exclusive use of the two words in contexts of worship elsewhere but also because the garden was a sanctuary, as we will argue throughout this segment. If this is so, then the manual labour of 'gardening' itself would be priestly activity, since it would be maintaining the upkeep and order of the sanctuary." Ibid., 68. This concession seems lead to a circular form of reasoning: The Garden is the first temple because it is "the place of the first priest"; the work of cultivating the Garden is priestly work because the Garden is a sanctuary. Contextually, cultivating the garden is more likely royal work because it is carrying out the blessing of dominion given in Genesis 1:28. Indeed all of Genesis 2 can be seen as expansion on Genesis 1:26-29. The first part of the chapter focuses mankind's rule over the earth, the latter part of the chapter focuses on the conditions for being fruitful and multiplying while the center of the chapter deals with the test to see whether mankind will remain under God's blessing or fall under his curse.

[44] Daniel I. Block, "Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence," in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis: Essays in Honor of G. K. Beale*, eds. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 10-12.

[45] Beale, *Temple*, 71.

[46] Speaking of the river, Block says, "While these images derive from Gn 2:10-14, without the later adaption we would not think of looking for a sanctuary here." Block, 13.

[47] See footnote 27 above. Also, Block notes that Bdellium "probably does not refer to a precious stone." It also is not associated with the high priest's breastplate. Onyx is connected to "the priestly vestments," but not exclusively so. Block, 13-14.

[48] Block, 15-16.

[49] "Note that the text does not say 'Garden *of* Eden' [but rather "in Eden"]. Apparently Eden was a larger geographical area than merely the spot occupied by the garden. Also, 'in the east' probably refers to the eastern part of the region called Eden." Currid, 1:100.

> (10) The argument from Ezekiel 28:18 is difficult to sustain. It seems best to understand Ezekiel as drawing a parallel between the king of Tyre and the cherub who was in Eden but who fell in pride just as in the previous passage Tyre had been spoken of in terms of a sunken ship.[50] Beale wishes to identify the cherub as Adam, but it is more likely that the cherub should be identified as Satan.[51] Finally, Beale wishes to identify the sanctuaries of verse 18 with Eden. Not only does the plural pose a problem (if there is precedent for identifying that courtyard, holy place, and holy of holies as separate sanctuaries, Beale does not provide it), but this profanation is connected to "the unrighteousness of your trade." Thus the profanation of the sanctuaries is probably referring directly to the king of Tyre and not to an event that happened in Eden.[52] In sum, though the tabernacle and temple looked back to the garden of Eden and the loss of the presence of God that occurred with humanity's exile from the garden, the garden itself was not a temple.[53]

The argument that the New Jerusalem is the new creation is problematic. Beale says that it is "an interpretive and theological problem" for John to see the new creation in Revelation 21:1 and the New Jerusalem in 21:2, 10-21. He asks, "How can we explain the apparent discrepancy that he saw a new heaven and earth in verse 1 and then saw only a city in the shape and structure of the temple in the remainder of the vision."[54] However, it is not clear that there is a discrepancy. As Beale himself notes, "It is possible…that he merely first sees the new world and then sees a city-temple *in* that world."[55] Beale rejects that solution because he says John "seems to equate" the two. As evidence he notes that no uncleanness will be permitted in the city, when it is well-established that there will be no uncleanness permitted in the entire new creation. He also claims that Revelation has a pattern in which what is seen is later interpreted by what is heard or vice versa, giving as an example the time when John hears of the Lion of the tribe of Judah but sees a Lamb (Rev. 5:5-6).[56]

In response, that something true of both the new creation and the New Jerusalem is said of the latter does not necessarily mean the two are the same. Further, the parallel with Revelation 5 is inexact. John sees both the new creation and the New Jerusalem before hearing about the New Jerusalem. It is not that he sees the New Creation and then hears about the New Jerusalem. He sees the New Jerusalem and then hears about it. Finally, there are indications in the text that the new creation and the New Jerusalem are distinct. In the first place, the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven (21:2, 10). By saying that he "saw a new heaven and a

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[50] Duguid says, "The king of Tyre is no more literally first creature, the cherub of the garden, than Tyre itself is literally a merchant ship in Ezekiel 27. . . . This means that just as there was never a ship that fit the description of the ship Tyre that actually sank . . . so also there need not here be reference to an actual perfect creature exactly matching the description of the guardian cherub, who was cast down to the earth." Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 348. Duguid is correct that just as Ezekiel drew a parallel between Tyre and a ship bearing wealth lost at sea, he compares the proud king of Tyre to a cherub who fell because of pride. But his hesitancy to consider this cherub real unfounded. Just as real sunken ships provide the background for Ezekiel 27, there was a real angel who fell from heaven due his ambitions to be God.

[51] "Yet even granting the figurative nature of the language, it seems that something more than a human creature is in view." Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr., *Ezekiel*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 266-67.

[52] Cooper, 267.

[53] "In my response to reading Gn 1-3 as temple-building texts, I have hinted at the fundamental hermeneutical problem involved in this approach. The question is, should we read Gn 1-3 in the light of later texts, or should we read later texts in light of these? If we read the accounts of the order given, then the creation account provides essential background to primeval history, which provides background for the patriarchal, exodus, and tabernacle narratives. By themselves and by this reading the accounts of Gn 1-3 offer no clues that a cosmic or Edenic temple might be involved. However, as noted above, the Edenic features of the tabernacle, the Jerusalem temple, and the temple envisioned by Ezekiel are obvious. Apparently their design and function intended to capture something of the original environment in which human beings were placed. However, the fact that Israel's sanctuaries were Edenic does not make Eden into a sacred shrine. At best this is a nonreciprocating equation." Block, 20-21.

[54] Beale, *Temple*, 365-66.

[55] Ibid.. 366.

[56] Ibid., 366-67.

new earth" directly before saying that he saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, John seems to imply that he saw the city coming out of the new heaven to the new earth. In addition, for the nations to walk by the light of the city and for kings to bring their glory in through its gates (21:24-26) implies that there are nations and kingdoms in the new creation outside of the New Jerusalem.[57] The vision seems to affirm that all of God's people dwell in New Jerusalem (21:12-13). But it also still seems to envision the people of God filling the entire new creation as nations with kings who reign under the King of kings.[58]

In addition to identifying the New Jerusalem as the new creation, Progressive Covenantalists identify the New Jerusalem with the temple. The connection between New Jerusalem and temple is made on the basis of its cubic shape, which was the shape of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle/temple.[59] Though the symbol of tabernacle/temple is replaced by the reality of God's presence in the new creation (21:22), an allusion back to the symbol in the shape of the city is reasonable.[60] A more explicit connection to the temple theme is the identification of the New Jerusalem as "the dwelling place [σκηνή] of God . . . with man" (21:3; cf. Ex. 25:8). Another reason to connect temple and New Jerusalem is that the city is identified as the "Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:9; cf. Eph. 2:22).

Nonetheless, based on the cubic shape of the city, it seems best to identify the New Jerusalem not simply with the temple imagery but with the Holy of Holies in particular. The Holy of Holies was the place where God was symbolically enthroned between the cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kings 19:14-15), and the New Jerusalem is the place where God and the Lamb is enthroned (Rev. 22:1). If the symbolism of the Holy of Holies is fulfilled in the New Jerusalem, then it remains plausible for the symbolism of the temple as a whole to be fulfilled in the new creation as a whole.[61]

Much of the Progressive Covenantalist viewpoint remains intact with the above analysis. The land theme and the temple theme remain related, the temple theme is seen as fulfilled in the new creation, and this the land theme is fulfilled in the new creation. However, there are some differences. There is no direct connection

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[57] This thesis is strengthened by the fact that Isaiah 60, a passage alluded to here, verses 3, 10, 16 refer simply to kings. John adds "of the earth."

[58] Thomas lists ten possible interpretations of the kings and nations. (1) These are nations from the Millennial period who came to Millennial Jerusalem and are now in the New Jerusalem. (2) These are those who resisted the beast in the Tribulation. (3) These are Gentiles who are spiritually Israelite. (4) These are people who are saved after the new creation replaced the old. (5) They are elect people who had not come to salvation before the passing of the old earth. (6) They are the nations that did not rebel at the end of the Millennium. (7) This is a symbol of universal salvation. (8) It is a symbol of "the universality of the knowledge of God" which will be true of all people in the new creation. (9) They are saved Gentiles who were not part of the church. (10) They are the saved who did not die in the millennium. Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 476-78. Several of these options are theologically problematic and may be dismissed out of hand (4, 5, 7). Several seem to imply that there is a certain class of people of God distinct from the people of God who will dwell in the New Jerusalem. This seems to create a problematic set of second class citizens in eternity (2, 3, 6, 9, 10). View 1 is ruled out by the fact that it is clearly the New Jerusalem and not the Millennial Jerusalem that is in view here. View 8 imports an idea into the text that is not there (knowledge of God) and does not deal with important parts of the text that are there. t would seem best to understand that peoples' national identities are not erased in eternity (Rev. 5:9; 7:9) but that these nations live both in and out of Jerusalem. This should not be troublesome for a Progressive Covenantalist to accept. For them the New Jerusalem symbolizes the whole new creation. Presumably this new creation is not just one large city, and presumably people live all over the new earth. But also presumably the Messiah reigns from a city. We might as well all it the New Jerusalem. And now we are back to a situation fairly close to what Revelation 21 describes.

[59] Martin, 155.

[60] Thomas, 467-68; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 753.

[61] This is especially the case if the tabernacle/temple is already viewed as a microcosm. See Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1991), 31

between the Abrahamic covenant's land promises and the temple/New Jerusalem theme. On this understanding when Abraham is looking for a better country than the Canaan he sojourned in, the city he receives is not the entire new creation but Jerusalem, the chief city of the land promised to him (Heb. 11:16). This is not to deny that a connection exists or that Abraham is "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13), only that such connections cannot be directly based on the exegesis of this theme. The second difference between the analysis proposed here and Progressive Covenantalism is the greater weight this paper gives to the reality of nations in the new creation.

Land and Rest

Martin describes the connection between land and rest:

> [T]he rest in Canaan functions as a type of God's heavenly rest in Genesis 2 and Psalm 95; that is, entering the presence of God on the last day. The rest that came with possession of the land was achieved in some measure under Joshua. . . . However, it still left something to be desired. The rest, then, anticipated the eschatological rest for the people of God, which David announced in Psalm 95.[62]

Because of the way Hebrews presents the fulfillment of this typology, Martin concludes that the land promise is not be confined to Canaan. He also holds that the promise is for those with promise is for those with a relationship with Christ.

The idea that rest in Canaan typifies eschatological rest is the teaching of Hebrews. Hebrews 3:11 quotes Psalm 95:11 to the effect that the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness would "not enter my rest" (cf. 3:18-19). Numbers 14:23, 30, 35 make clear that what they do not enter is the land. But the author of Hebrews concludes from the use of "today" by David in Psalm 95 that the conquest of Canaan in Joshua's day did not fulfill the promise of rest (Heb. 4:8-11). And yet the rest of God that his people enter into is not disconnected from the promised land. Psalm 132:13-14 identifies Zion as Yhwh's eternal resting place.[63]

Martin also holds that the antitype is expanded beyond Canaan to encompass the new creation. This is also a reasonable conclusion from Hebrews. Hebrews 4:3-4 indicates that the rest of God to which believers enter is the rest that God began upon finishing Creation. This also indicates that the rest has a creation-wide aspect to it. In fact, it may be that believers finally enter God's rest when they fulfill the creation blessing of rightly ruling over God's earth.[64] Thus the rest is centered on Zion, and includes Canaan,[65] but extends throughout the world.

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[62] Martin, 143.

[63] Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 143-44, 160-62; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 144, 168-70; John Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 3:97.

[64] For a similar view, see David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 40-41. If this supposition is correct, I would view the Millennium as the period in which mankind under the Messiah's rule fulfils God's intentions in the creation blessing. However, the fulfilling of this blessing and the entering into God's rest cannot mean that humans cease to rule over the earth or that they are inactive in the new creation. See Revelation 21:24-26; 22:5.

[65] Martin says, God's people are not exhorted to return to the type of rest in the land of Canaan. Rather, they are exhorted to enter God's eschatological rest." Martin, 143. There is a bit of category confusion here. God's eschatological rest includes Canaan. It is not the land of Canaan simpliciter that is the type. It is the land of Canaan after Joshua conquered Canaan and gave the people rest that is the type. More on this below.

Land and Kingdom

Wellum identifies "the entire universe [as] God's kingdom" on the basis of God as Creator and sovereign of all things.[66] He also holds that due to the Fall there is no "an important distinction between the sovereignty and rule of God over the entire creation and the coming of his *saving reign* in the context of a rebellious creation to make all things right."[67] As God's image-bearers, humans are priest-kings through whom "God's rule is extended throughout the life of the covenant community *and* to the entire creation."[68] As he turns his attention to the New Testament, Wellum seems to minimize the connection of the kingdom to the land. He says, "[The kingdom of God] does *not* primarily refer to a certain geographical location, rather the phrase tells us more about *God* (the fact that he reigns) than about anything else."[69] Wellum does indicate that though the kingdom is already present its consummation is "not yet." Nonetheless he does not specify whether or not there is a geographical component to the kingdom in the consummation.[70] Martin does indicate that there is a geographical component to the consummated kingdom. Martin summarizes kingdom as "God's people in God's place under God's rule."[71] In the following summary of the relation of each of the biblical covenants to the kingdom theme, the "God's place" part of the definition receives no attention. But later Martin says, "[T]he entire world will become God's kingdom and his people's inheritance. An important link is forged, then, between inheritance, the Promised Land and the kingdom of God."[72]

Once again Progressive Covenantalists have much right, and once again there is room for refining their proposal. First, the distinction between the "sovereign reign" and the "saving reign" of God is not quite the right distinction. The sovereign reign of God does need to be distinguished from the kingdom of God because the former has always been present while the latter arrived with Jesus Christ. But this is not the best way of explaining the difference between God's ever-present reign and the kingdom that arrived with Christ.

The better way of distinguishing God's sovereign/providential reign from the kingdom of God arises from the storyline of Scripture as it is run through the covenants. The foundation for this distinction can be laid in Gentry's observation that Hebrew grammar requires Genesis 1:26 to be translated "let us make man . . . *so that* they may rule. . . ."[73] This is the foundation of the kingdom theme in the Bible. God made mankind to rule, and the scope of this reign is the earth (Gen. 1:28). Sin, of course, frustrated this rule. Mankind does not rule over the world under God. He now rules in opposition to God. Injustice is often the result of human rule. The covenants exist, however, to restore the rule of man over the earth under God's greater rule. The Noahic covenant reaffirms that the reign of man over the earth, though affected by the Fall, has not been removed due to the Fall. The Abrahamic covenant reaffirms the creation blessing[74] in kingly terms[75] for the

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[66] Gentry and Wellum, 592.
[67] Ibid., 593.
[68] Ibid., 594. It is hard to tell from this context whether Wellum is referring to God's intentions for all humans in the covenant of creation, to people in the Old Testament covenants, or to the redeemed in the New Covenant.
[69] Ibid., 595-96.
[70] Ibid., 596-99.
[71] Martin, 42.
[72] Ibid., 137.
[73] Gentry and Wellum, 188; cf. NIV 2011.
[74] "The commission of Gen 1:28 involved the following elements: (1)'God blessed them'; (2) 'be fruitful and multiply'; (3) 'fill the earth'; (4) 'subdue' the 'earth'; (4) 'rule over . . . all the earth' (so Gen 1:26, and reiterated in 1:28). The commission is repeated, for example, to Abraham: (1) 'I will greatly bless you; and (2) will greatly multiply your seed . . . ; (3–5) and your seed will possess the gate of their enemies [= "subdue and rule"]. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. . .' (Gen 22:17–18)." Gregory K. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 13.
[75] Beale comments, "Notice that the ruling aspect of the commission is expressed to Abraham elsewhere as a role of "kingship" (Gen 17:6, 16), and likewise with respect to Jacob (Gen 35:11)." Beale, "Eden," 13, n. 18. Wenham sees a royal aspect to the entire set of promises: "Behind the fourfold promise of nationhood, a great name, divine protection,

sake of the nations. As it relates to the kingdom, the Mosaic covenant governed the establishment of Israel in the land and thus made way for the Davidic covenant. In the Davidic covenant a promised Davidic king who will establish God's kingdom on earth is promised. The problem of sin was dealt with in Christ's new covenant sacrifice, which led to his enthronement, now in heaven and later on the earth (Acts 2:34-36; Rev. 20:4; 22:1). Notable to the way the covenants develop the kingdom theme is the emphasis on a human king ruling under God. It is a son of Adam, the seed of the woman, the son of Abraham, the son of David that must be king. What distinguishes the providential reign of God over all things from the kingdom of God announced by Jesus in the Gospel is that the latter is a restoration of the rule of God's image-bearer under God.[76]

That the Messiah's reign in the kingdom of God fulfills the reign of man over God's world is confirmed by the quotation of Psalm 8 by Hebrews 2. Psalm 8:6 refers back to Genesis 1:26-28: "You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet." Hebrews 2:8-9 indicates that God's purpose for mankind is fulfilled in Jesus.[77]

On this understanding, the kingdom inaugurated by the Messiah does have an emphasis on salvation and transformation. The Messiah's goal is to reverse the Fall by creating a people who will rule the earth under God's greater rule (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 22:5). For this people to fulfill this goal, they must be saved and transformed. Those who are not will be judged by the king when he returns and fully establishes his reign on earth. This conception of the kingdom does not allow the "a theocratic state in which God rules by his human vassal in the Davidic dynasty" and "the immediate transforming reign of God" to be pitted against each other. The latter is what makes the former possible.

Further, on this understanding, it is significant that Jesus remains human even as the ascended Christ. What is more, he remains a son of Abraham and a son of David. He is specifically an Israelite king over the Israelite kingdom, and it is as such that he rules over the world. God specifically moved his kingdom plan forward through Israelite covenants. The expansion of the Davidic Messiah's kingdom from the borders promised to Abraham to the entire world is specified in Old Testament passages related to these covenants.

In Genesis 22 God promises that Israel will possess the gates of its enemies (22:17). This at least refers to the conquest of the land under Joshua.[78] But certain prophetic passages also connect Israel's future rule over her enemies to the promise that the seed of Abraham would be a blessing to all the nations of earth. For instance, Isaiah 14:2 predicts that once Israel is restored to the land after a time of tribulation (ch. 13), she will "take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them." In that future day, "the nation and kingdom that will not serve you will perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste" (Isa. 60:12; cf. Jer. 31:7-9). Since Isaiah 11 and Zechariah 14 indicate that in the Millennium not all nations will submit to the Messianic King in all things and will therefore come under judgment, there could be something punitive in view. However, the rule of the Messianic King over Israel's former enemies can also be viewed as a great

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and mediatorship of blessing E. Ruprecht (VT 29 [1979] 445-64) has plausibly detected echoes of royal ideology. What Abram is here promised was the hope of many an oriental monarch (cf. 2 Sam 7:9; Ps. 72:17)." Wenham, 1:275.

[76] If one starts with the assumption that the kingdom is God's providential rule over creation, then one is left with the difficult question of how the kingdom comes with the Messiah. The above formulation alleviates that problem.

[77] There is some debate about whether 2:8b refers to man or to Jesus. Ellingworth comments, "J Kögel, in his detailed examination of this passage, finally refused to choose between a christological and an anthropological interpretation: 'The result is that we are to think of mankind as such, but not in such a way as to lose sight of the further reference to the Son of Man *par excellence*.' Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 151.

[78] Wenham, WBC, 2:112.

blessing to those nations.[79] From this latter perspective there is a close connection, then, between Abraham's seed possessing the gates of its enemies and all the nations of the earth being blessed in Abraham's seed (22:18).

A similar extension of the land promise may be found in Genesis 35. Along with the reaffirmation of the land promise, Jacob is promised, "a nation and a company of nations shall come from you" (35:11) Land is likely implied in this promise.[80] Likewise kings rule over land, so land is also likely implied in the promise, "and kings shall come from your own body" (35:11). Gentry argues that *goyim* does not properly apply to the twelve tribes since they were not "politically and socially structured entities with government." Nor does the divided kingdom of two nations constitute a "company of nations."[81] Thus, he argues that this is a promise of the bringing in of the Gentiles. The difficulty with Gentry's view is that the kings are said to come, "from your loins" (lit.). "From you" stands in parallel with this phrase. This would indicate that the nations and the kings come from Jacob in physical descent. Further, it seems that the tribes of Israel could legitimately be said to be "politically and socially structured entities with government." The tribes had their elders; they were not without government. Gentry could maintain his case, however, by arguing that an intentional distinction is meant between the kings who come by physical descent ("from your loins") and the nations that are related to Jacob in a more generic "from you." This is possible, and it would be the universal blessing aspect of the promise to Abraham that would be alluded to by this distinction. It would also be an early instance of implied extension of the land promise.

Jacob's blessing of Judah establishes that a son of Judah will reign over Israel. But not only will the tribes of Israel be subject to him, the peoples will obey him (49:10).[82] The earth over which this king from Judah will reign is one of abundant fertility. A donkey can be tied to a choice vine with no concern that it will eat the vine. And while no one would actually wash clothes with wine rather than water, the imagery of doing so highlights again the abundant fertility of the land.[83] This is a land in which the curse has been removed. This is an explicit indication that the land promise will extend beyond the borders of the Promised Land to encompass the entire new creation.[84]

The initial statement of the Davidic covenant also contains an indication that the Davidic Messiah would reign over more than Israel alone. In reflecting on God's promises, David said, "This is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD!" (2 Sam. 7:19). Dumbrell summarizes Walter Kaiser's seminal study:

> "W. C. Kaiser has shown clearly that v. 19b must be taken as a statement, and that the Heb. phrase concerned serves to introduce or to summarize (as here) a set of instructions. Under 'this' the promises of the first half of the chapter are being referred to, while under 'law of man' their implications as David understood them are contained. . . . With more than some probability Kaiser suggests that the sense given to 2 Sam. 7:19b is, 'This is the charter by which humanity will be directed.' That is to say, in the oracle delivered to him, David rightly sees the future and destiny of the human race involved."[85]

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[79] Saucy, 231-34; cf. Gentry and Wellum, 399-400.
[80] Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B&H, 2005), 622.
[81] Gentry and Wellum, 292-93.
[82] Mathews, 2:896; cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard (Dallas: Word, 1994), 2:478.
[83] Wenham, 2:279; Mathews, 2:896-97; James McKeown, *Genesis*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary, ed. J. Gordon McConville and Craig Bartholomew (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 186.
[84] If these interpretations are correct, then at the end of the toldedth sections that focus on Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph/Judah are promises that extend the land blessing beyond the confines of Israel's land.
[85] W. J. Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 151-52.

Gentry note the significance: "Since the God whom the Davidic king represented was not limited to a local region or territory, but was the creator God and Sovereign of the whole world, the rule of the Davidic king would have repercussions for *all* the nations, not just for Israel."[86]

The same expansion of the territory Messiah's kingdom can be seen in the Psalms. The Father says to the Son in Psalm 2, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" (2:8).[87] Psalm 72:8 says of the Messianic king, "May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River," one of the boundaries of the promised land, "to the ends of the earth!" Less explicitly, but still in keeping with these promises, David speaks of the Messiah's rule over Moab, Edom, and Philistia in addition to Israel (Ps. 108:7-9). Psalm 110 reveals that Lord seated at the right hand of Yhwh will one day "shatter kings on the day of wrath" (110:5) and will "execute judgment among the nations" (Ps. 110:6).

Examples of the Davidic Messiah ruling over the nations can be found elsewhere in Scripture,[88] but these passages sufficiently establish was is needed for the argument. Namely, that when Paul said that God promised that Abraham "would be heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13) he has firm exegetical basis in the Old Testament for seeing the extension of the land promise to the entire world.[89]

A number of conclusions should be drawn from these explicit promises of the extension of the land promise. First, it is important to see that the Messiah is the key person through whom the land promise is expanded. It is through his reign that this expansion takes place. There would be no argument from Progressive Covenantalists on this point. But this claim has an entailment that they do not seem to reckon with, namely, that the Messiah is a Davidic king who rules from Zion over Israel and from there to the ends of the earth (Ps. 2:6; 72:8). Thus the expansion of the land promise to encompass the world does not negate the promises to Israel in particular about the land. Second, the fact that these expansive promises sit alongside more specific promises to Israel about its particular land means that the two should not be pitted against each other. The reality of the expansion of the land promise to encompass the world is not the negation of the center from which the expansion takes place. The enjoyment by the nations of lands that are caught up in the land promise in the new creation does not negate Israel's enjoyment of the land promise in its own nation. Third, the expansion of the land promise rests primarily on these implicit and explicit promises rather than primarily on typology. Though Progressive Covenantalists recognize the promises, they place the weight of their argument on typology.

On Typology

The cornerstone of the Progressive Coventantalist view of the land rests on their view of the land as a type. Martin writes, "The aim of the present study is to demonstrate that the land promised to Abraham . . . serves

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[86] Gentry and Wellum, 400.

[87] For an argument that this and others of these Psalms refer to the Messiah, see Gordon Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 163-64.

[88] Gentry argues that the "sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3, NKJV) refers to the steadfast love shown by the Davidic Messiah. In context, these mercies would be shown to the peoples or nations (Isa. 55:4). Gentry and Wellum, 406-21.

[89] Martin effectively argues this point. Martin, 134-36. Nelson Hsieh argues that contextually Paul defines the promise noted in 4:13 "in terms of Abraham becoming the father of many nations and having innumerable descendants (vv. 17-18)," To be heir of the world thus means that Abraham is heir of a seed from many nations who have faith in God as he did. Not only does this reading make better sense of the context, but also, Hsieh argues, because this is a promise that Abraham believed. Abraham knew of the promise that he would be the father of many nations. Abraham did not know (and thus could not believe) and expanded land promise. Hsieh closes his article by making the case that κόσμος and κληρονόμος can refer to seed and need not point to the land promise. Nelson S. Hsieh, "Abraham as 'Heir of the World': Does Romans 4:13 Expand the Old Testament Abrahamic Land Promises?" *Master's Seminary Journal* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 95-110. Whether or not Martin or Hsieh is correct regarding Romans 4, the expansion of the land promise to the world is found in numerous Old Testament texts.

as a type throughout Israel's history that anticipates the even greater land—prepared for all of God's people throughout history."[90] Progressive Covenantalism presents itself as a mediating system between Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology, and Wellum describes the difference between the two systems on the land promise in terms of a different understanding of the typology:

> In the case of dispensational theology, if they viewed as typological both the land of Israel and the nation itself, then their view, at its core, would no longer be valid. Why? For the reason that the land promise would not require a future, 'literal' fulfillment in the millennial age; the land itself is a type and pattern of Eden and thus the entire creation, which reaches its fulfillment in the dawning of a new creation. Christ, then, as the antitype of Israel, receives the land promise and fulfills it by his inauguration of a new covenant which is organically locked to new creation.[91]

Wellum says "the New Testament helps us understand that the land promise is . . . typological of the new creation."[92] He concedes that dispensationalists would be correct "as long as one can demonstrate that the land promise, in the Abrahamic covenant and throughout the biblical covenants, is not better viewed as typological of the creation."[93]

Martin summarizes how this typology works:

> The Promised Land in the Old Testament—when situated within the kingdom and covenantal framework of Scripture as it progressively unfolds—was designed by God to serve as a type or pattern of a greater future reality. Every fulfillment is followed by failure and, although the promise is fulfilled at various points, it anticipates a greater and final fulfillment. . . . Therefore the promise of land to the nation of Israel is understood within the broader context of God's programmatic agenda that begins with Adam, progresses from Abraham to Israel, and culminates in an international community living in a new creation. In other words, the national dimension involving the geographical territory of Israel should be viewed as a transitional stage in the outworking of God's redemptive plan, a plan that spans from creation to new creation and ultimately includes people from every nation filling the entire earth.[94]

Wellum argues the same point: "Thus the 'land promise' associated with the Abrahamic covenant cannot be understood apart from a backward and forward look: backward to the archetype reality of Eden and the entire creation, and forward, though the covenants, to its antitypical fulfillment in the new creation that Jesus has inaugurated in the new covenant."[95]

The Land as Type and as Non-Type

There are a number of difficulties with the Progressive Covenantal proposal. First, to say that the land is typical is not careful enough. The land as it is part of the new creation is not typical, for it is part of the fulfillment. Nor would the land in the centuries before the promise or the conquest by typical of the new creation. Likewise, the land with its people exiled and captive is not typological of the new creation.

There are two points in Israel's history in which the land clearly is typical of the new creation. The first is in the book of Joshua. Land is a key theme of this book—from the opening of the book in which God tells Joshua to lead the people into the land through record of the conquest and the allocation of the land. Joshua

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[90] Martin, 17.
[91] Gentry and Wellum, 122.
[92] Ibid., 86. In context, Wellum identifies this as the position of covenant theology. But the way he describes the position, "the land promise is that which is fulfilled in the coming of Christ and the dawning of the new creation and, as such, is typological of the new creation," matches the progressive covenantalist view. Later Wellum will say, "We do agree with covenant theology that the land of Israel is typological." Ibid., 114, n. 75.
[93] Ibid., 609.
[94] Martin, 115.
[95] Gentry and Wellum, 607.

shows how the creation blessing is lived out by Israel in a fallen world. The land must be purged of God's enemies, who have corrupted the land with their sin. The conquest itself typifies the Second Coming in which the Tribulation and return of Christ effect a conquest and purification of the earth.[96] The result of the conquest was rest for God's people in the land (Jos. 1:13, 15; 11:23; 14:15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1).[97] The Israelites were to live in the land in accordance with God's covenant regulations. In this way the nations would be able to see what a land under righteous dominion looks like. In this way Israel's life in the land typified life in the new creation. Life in the new creation is the attainment of Sabbath rest in which mankind rules over the earth under God's greater rule; this is the antitype to the type of the land in Joshua.

The second point in Israel's history in which the land is clearly typical of the new creation occurs in Solomon's reign. In 1 Kings 4 the author intentionally draws parallels between Solomon's reign and the Abrahamic covenant. Verse 20 says, "Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea," a reference back to Genesis 22:17, "I will surely multiply your offspring . . . as the sand that is on the seashore." Verse 21 of 1 Kings 4 says, "Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border or Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life." This is a partial fulfillment of God's promise, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18; cf. 17:8). First Kings 4:34 says that "people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom." This reflects Genesis 22:8, "And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (cf. 12:3; 18:18). Thus all three aspects of the Abrahamic covenant—seed, land, and blessing—are fulfilled in Solomon's reign. And yet, as the narrative of Kings demonstrates, these elements are present typologically, pointing to their greater fulfillment in the future.

Indeed, the language of 1 Kings 4 is the language that the prophets use to describe the Messianic kingdom in the latter days.[98] In Solomon's day, "Judah and Israel lived in safety" (4:25). In the Messianic kingdom "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more . . . and no one shall make them afraid (Mic. 4:3-5). In Solomon's day, this safety is for "every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (1 Kgs. 4:25). In the Messianic kingdom, "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (Mic. 4:4; cf. Zech. 3:10).[99] In Solomon's day, "people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom" (1 Kgs. 4:34). In the Messianic kingdom, "many nations shall come, and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:2).[100]

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[96] See Poythress, 152-53. The idea above is developed somewhat differently from Poythress, but he deserves credit for stimulating my thinking along these lines.

[97] See Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 108.

[98] Since Micah prophesied before Kings was written, it seems likely that the author of Kings intentionally used language from Micah to connect this part of Solomon's reign typologically with the Messianic kingdom.

[99] Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, New International Biblical Commentary, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. and Robert K. Johnston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 59.

[100] The connection between wisdom and law in the Kings/Micah comparison is not strained. As Craig Bartholomew observes, "The wisdom and legal traditions in the OT are clearly distinct, and yet they manifest some awareness of each other. Both have in common the ordering of the life of God's people. Van Leeuwen argues persuasively, as we have seen, that a notion of creation order underlies the surface metaphors of Proverbs 1-9." Craig G. Bartholomew, "A God for Life, and Not Just for Christmas!" in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 55. Thus the wisdom of Solomon's rule points forward to the

It may be significant to the typology that Solomon is a king who rules over other kingdoms. Though the boundaries given in 1 Kings 4:24-25 correspond to those God promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18), the text does not actually say that the Israelite kingdom filled those borders. Rather, Solomon had dominion over all of the kings within those borders. This also reflects the new creation in which the King of kings rules not over an undifferentiated mass of people but over other kings and kingdoms.[101]

The significance of these observations should be plain. If the land is not a type in and of itself but only at certain periods of Israel's history, then one cannot conclude on the basis of typology that the land of Israel is only a shadow with no future significance.[102] The shadow would be the land in the time of Joshua or in the time of Solomon. The substance would be the Davidic Messiah ruling from that land over the nations in the new earth. If other nations exist in lands on the new earth, why not the redeemed of Israel in the land promised to Israel? (More on this below.)

Promises and Types

The second difficulty with the Progressive Covenantalist argument from typology is the identification of the land *promise* as a type. Perhaps this is simply an imprecise statement or a mistaken statement since more commonly they identify the land as the type. Be that as it may, the identification of the promise as a type is problematic. As Craig Blaising notes, "A promise entails an obligation. When somebody makes a promise, they're not just stating something, they are doing something. They are forming a relationship and creating an expectation that carries moral obligation. Failure to complete a promise is a violation of one's word. It is a serious matter."[103] Indeed, "the promise and the oath are referred to as 'two unchangeable things' (Heb. 6:18)."[104] He concludes, "To posit a 'fulfillment' of these covenant promises by means of a reality shift in the thing promised overlooks the performative nature of the word of promise, violates the legitimate expectations of the recipients, and brings the integrity of God into question."[105]

Certain statements of Wellum's would seem to be in agreement with Blaising. In distinguishing their approach to canonical interpretation from "most proponents of *sensus plenior*," Wellum writes, "God says more than the individual authors may have known, yet he does not contravene what the authors wrote and intended."[106] If by this he means that that the promise to Israel of the land would be expanded (as even the Old Testament indicated) to include the nations dwelling in the world earth—without denying that Israel, as one of these nations, receives the particular land promised—then all would be well. The integrity of the promise would be maintained alongside the expansion of the promise.

Wellum, and other Progressive Covenantalists, do deny that Israel, as one of these nations, receives the particular land promised to it. The reason they do not see this denial as contradicting Wellum's statement in the previous paragraph or violating the integrity of God's promise is likely due to the fact that Progressive

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Messiah's rule in which people once again live according to the created order, that is, humans live out the dominion of Genesis 1:28 under God's greater rule.

[101] Note also that this is a rule that brings blessing to the kings of the earth, for they come to Solomon for wisdom.

[102] Some may wish to challenge the idea that typology always involves a move from shadow to substance (John S. Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg [Wheaton: Crossway, 1988], 77-76), but such a challenge is not necessary to the argument of this paper.

[103] Craig A. Blaising, "Israel and Hermeneutics," in *The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 160.

[104] Ibid. 161. Blaising also points out that promises of the Abrahamic covenant is tied to the central storyline of Scripture. "God's promise, covenant and oath to Abraham is not a peripheral element in the story of the Bible. It is a key structural component in the central plot lien." Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Gentry and Wellum, 85, n. 11.

Covenantalists see Israel as typological. For Progressive Covenantalists, Christ is the antitype of Israel. As the church is in Christ, it can receive the promises made to Israel.[107] Addressing that issue is far beyond the scope of this paper, and yet something must be said for this paper's argument to cohere. Perhaps all that needs to be noted is what Brent Parker says about the ways in which Israel is and is not a type in their view: "[I]t is important to recognize that when a person or entity is identified as typological, this does not include every aspect of the person or entity. . . . Israel as an ethnic group is not a type, but our claim is that national Israel in terms of its role, vocation, calling, and identity is typological of Christ and thus rules out the notion of a future national role of Israel in the plan of God. Ethnic Jews and Gentiles in Christ are co-heirs and fellow partakers of promise."[108]

For the premise of this paper to hold, one does not need to ascribe to ethnic Israel a special role, vocation, or calling. The simple acknowledgement of that Israel as an ethnic group continues and could receive land in the eternal state is all that needs to be acknowledged.

Parker, however, resists the idea that national identities persist into eternity: "[A]though the language of 'nations' is employed in Revelation 21-22, such does not establish that separate national identities or entities will continue throughout the consummated state."[109] This view suffers from a major flaw. It does not allow a major theme of the Scriptures to be consummated in the biblical storyline. Christopher J. H. Wright observes,

> The nations of humanity preoccupy the biblical narrative from beginning to end. . . . The obvious reason for this is that the Bible is, of course, preoccupied with the relationship between God and humanity, and humanity exists in nations. And where the Bible focuses especially on the people of God, that people necessarily lives in history in the midst of the nations. "It is clear that 'Israel as a light to the nations' is no peripheral theme within the canonical process. The nations are the matrix of Israel's life, the raison d'être of her very existence."[110]

Wright argues that the nations are part of the creation order. "[T]he Bible does not imply that ethnic or national diversity is in itself sinful or the product of the Fall . . . . Rather, nations are simply 'there' as a given part of the human race as God created it to be"[111] Wright notes that Paul affirms this in Acts 17:26, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place."[112] He concludes, "National distinctives, then, are part of

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[107] Brent E. Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theology* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 63-64. 67-68.

[108] Ibid., 52. The distinction Parker draws between Israel as an ethnic group and Israel as typological of Christ is necessary since the New Testament continues to recognize the Israel as an ethnic group. For instance, one must be able to continue to speak of Israel as an ethnic group to speak of them as branches that will be grafted back into the olive tree.

[109] Ibid., 66. The basis for the assertion is not clear. It may be that Parker is advocating the idea that the New Jerusalem is not a city but the people of God and that the nations coming into the city is a way of saying that the people of God is multiethnic. If so, this line of reasoning is unconvincing for two reasons. First, if this is the point, why mention kings? Second, Osborne notes, "Yet while it is possible that John transformed the Jewish tradition of an end-time New Jerusalem into a symbol of the people themselves, that is not required by the text. In Deutsch's study of the transformation of the images of this text, she concludes (1987: 124) that John chose this a contrast to the evil city of Babylon the Great. . . . Babylon was both a people and a place, and that is the better answer here. It is a people in 21:9-10, when the angel shows John the New Jerusalem as 'the bride, the wife of the Lamb' and in 21:13-14, when the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles are the gates and the foundations of the city. But it is a place in 21:3 where God 'dwells' with his people, in 21:7-8 where the readers either 'inherit' it or face the lake of fire, and in 21:24, 26 where the glory of the nations are brought into it." Osborne, 733.

[110] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 454, citing Duane L. Christensen, "Nations," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1037.

[111] Wright, *Mission*, 455-56.

[112] Ibid., 456. He also holds that Paul is drawing on Deut. 32:8.

the kaleidoscopic diversity of creation at the human level, analogous to the wonderful prodigality of biodiversity at every other level of God's creation."[113]

If nations are part of the creation order, it is also clear that nations have been affected by the Fall. And if nations are affected by the Fall, then they form a part of the creation order in need of redemption: "The mission of God is not merely the salvation if innumerable souls but specifically the healing of the nations."[114] Thus in new creation one would expect to see nations, and this is what one does see in Scripture:

> The inhabitants of the new creation are not portrayed as a homogenized mass or as a single global culture. Rather they will display the continuing glorious diversity of the human race through history: People of every tribe and language and people and nation will bring their wealth and their praises into the city of God (Rev 7:9; 21:24-26). The image we might prefer for the Bible's portrait of the nations is not a melting put (in which all differences are blended together into a single alloy) but a salad bowl (in which all ingredients preserve their distinctive color, texture, and taste). The new creation will preserve the rich diversity of the original creation, but purged of the sin-laden effects of the Fall.[115]

If eternity is lived on a new earth, and if nations exist on the new earth, and if Israel is one of these nations, why would God not fulfill his specific promise to give Israel land. In fact, it would be odd for Israel to receive some other land or no land in such circumstances.

Covenants and Conditions

Perhaps Progressive Covenantalists do not see the integrity of God at stake in fulfilling the land promise because they see the promise as conditional. Wellum writes, "There is a sense in which we agree with Michael Horton that Israel forfeited the promise of the land because of her disobedience, hence the reason for the exile." However, in another sense Jesus as the "greater than Israel" will bring about the land promise (in the new creation).[116] The basis for this line of thinking is the view that covenants are neither conditional nor unconditional but are in some sense both.[117] Wellum notes, "Viewing the biblical covenants as either unconditional or conditional is not quite right." There are both conditional and unconditional elements in all of the covenants resulting in "a deliberate *tension* within the covenants." One the one hand, the covenants reveal God and his promises. "On the other hand, all the biblical covenants also demand an obedient partner."[118] Thus:

> In this sense there is a conditional or bilateral element to the covenants. This is certainly evident with Adam as he is given commands and responsibilities to fulfill, with the expectation that he will do so perfectly. . . . Furthermore, in the Noahic covenant, obedience is also demanded, which is true of Abraham, the nation of Israel, David and his sons, and in the greatest way imaginable in the coming of the Son, who obeys perfectly and completely. . . . Yet as the biblical covenants progress through redemptive-history, this *tension* grows, since it becomes evident that it is only the Lord himself who remains the faithful covenant partner.[119]

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[113] Ibid. Someone might object that the biblical point at which God "divided mankind" (Deut. 32:8) was the judgment at Babel. On the one hand, the scattering of the nations is an exilic judgment for disobedience. On the other hand, this scattering over the face of the earth is what makes possible the fulfillment of the creation blessing's promise that mankind will fill the earth. In that sense, it is a pressing of humanity back to the creational order. See McKeown, 72; Mathews, 1:467.
[114] Wright, *Mission*, 456.
[115] Ibid..
[116] Gentry and Wellum, 706.
[117] Ibid., 120-21; 285-86, 609-10, 634, 705.
[118] Ibid., 609-10.
[119] Ibid., 610.

Ardel Caneday claims that the division of covenants into the categories of "unconditional" and "conditional" is "too stark and simplistic."[120] He elaborates:

> If we use *unconditional*, should it not refer to God's establishment of all his covenants with humans? Was not God's choosing of Abraham and of Isaac not Ishmael, and of Jacob not Esau, *unconditional* (cf. Rom 9:6-24)? As for *conditional*, the term refers to the *covenantal stipulations* placed upon humans with whom God enters covenant, and which do not jeopardize fulfillment of any of God's covenants. God obligates humans to obey what he stipulates in his covenants, and all whom he desires to enable do obey.[121]

But this is, to use Caneday's words, "too stark and simplistic." The best of those who recognize the existence of both unconditional and conditional covenants are more nuanced about precisely what these labels do and do not refer to. For instance, Jonathan Lunde maintains the distinction between "the 'royal grant' or 'unconditional' covenant" and "a 'conditional' or 'bilateral' covenant." But Lunde does not dispute Caneday's point that the choosing of the covenant partner is unconditional: "[T]he covenants are always grounded and established in the context of God's *prior grace* toward the people entering the covenant, even in the case of the conditional variety."[122] Nor does Lunde dispute that all covenants have "covenant stipulations": "That is not to say that there are no demands placed on people in a grant covenant. Such are always present."[123] Thus, the terms *conditional* and *unconditional* relate not to the selection of the covenant partner or to the presence of stipulations, as Caneday argued. Rather, *conditional* and *unconditional* identify whether the fulfillment of the covenant depends upon the promises of God alone or upon the obedience to the covenant stipulations. The Noahic covenant is a case in point: "its benefits are unconditional, grounded solely in God's commitment to provide them."[124] If the benefits were conditional upon the obedience of the covenant partner, then we would continually be in danger of another worldwide flood.

In making his covenantal promise to Abraham, God enacted a ceremony in which a spoking firepot and flaming torch passing between animals that had been divided. The smoking fire pot and flaming torch that pass between the pieces likely represent God. They call to mind God's revelation of himself in fire in Exodus at the burning bush and at Sinai.[125] The significance of passing through the pieces is indicated by Jeremiah 34:18: "And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts."[126] Notably, God has placed Abram in a deep sleep, God passes through the pieces himself. This indicates a unilateral promise by God to fulfill the land promise for Abraham.[127] Furthermore, the unilateral promise includes

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[120] Ardel B. Caneday, "Covenantal Life with God from Eden to Holy City," in *Progressive Covenantalism*, 101.
[121] Ibid., 102.
[122] Jonathan Lunde, *Following Jesus, the Servant King: A Biblical Theology of Covenantal Discipleship*, Biblical Theology for Life, ed. Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 40.
[123] Ibid., 39.
[124] Ibid., 92. Lunde is not dismissing the covenantal stipulations with this comment: "In spite of the unconditional character of this covenant, we have seen that God still places demands on people in it—to steward the earth and to respect both human and animal life." Ibid.
[125] See McKeown, 93.
[126] Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InverVarsity, 2003), 80; Gentry and Wellum, 250-56. I agree with Gentry, against Wenham and Mathews, that the elements of the covenant in this passage and Jeremiah are not bound to a particular time but persisted in their significance from the time of Abraham to Jeremiah.
[127] It is true that later there are statements like the one found in Genesis 22:16-17: "because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you. . . ." The order of events in the Abraham narrative is important for making sense of the causal statements in 22:15, 18. God already made an unconditional promise that Abraham's seed would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (15:4-5). God had alone passed between the cut animals, noting that he alone was responsible for upholding the covenant. How can God now say that he will bring to pass covenantal blessings because of Abraham's obedience? The answer probably in the fact that Genesis 22 outlines a test

Abraham's physical seed (Gen. 15:18), defined in this passage as those who sojourn in Egypt for four hundred years before returning to dispossess the inhabitants of the land (Gen. 15:13-16).

The way the covenants play out in Israel's history confirms this understanding. For instance, when God says in Hosea 1:9, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God," he indicates a reversal of the Mosaic covenant in which God promised, "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:7; cf. Lev. 26:12; Dt. 27:9). The latter phrase of verse 9 could be translated, "And I [will be] Not I Am to you," a reversal of the name God revealed to the people at the time of the exodus (Ex. 3:14). The import of the language is that as regards the Mosaic covenant, the people have so violated the covenant that it is as if they are now like the Gentiles—they are not God's people and God is not their God. Yet from this word of judgment, there comes a word of promise: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered" (Hos. 1:10). Since this is an allusion to the Abrahamic covenant, the implication is that their violation of the Mosaic covenant which leads to them becoming "Not my People" is backstopped by the Abrahamic covenant. Because of God's promises to Abraham, "in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'children of the living God.'" Violation of the Mosaic covenant could lead to them being not my people, but the promises of the Abrahamic covenant ensure that they will one day be identified as God's children.

Notice also the land aspect of the promise. It is not only that Israel will once again be identified as the children of God. This will happen in a particular place. Since the judgment was given to Israel in the land, this implies a return to the land is part of their restoration. This is confirmed in verse 11: "And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel." This interpretation is debated. Some understand it to directly indicate a return from exile.[128] Against this, "land" in this interpretation would refer to the Gentile lands that they return from. This seems to be an unlikely use of the term.[129] It seems more likely that this refers to a flourishing of the people within the land.[130]

This is consistent with other parts of Scripture. Leviticus 26:40-45 moves from the pronouncement of the curse of exile upon Israel for breach of the Mosaic covenant to the promise of restoration due to the Abrahamic covenant: "I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land" (Lev. 26:42). Milgrom comments, "This is to

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for Abraham. His faith is tested to see if he truly trusts God's promises when God commands him to do something that would seem to put those promises in jeopardy. Abraham demonstrates his faith in God's promises by trusting that God would raise Isaac from the dead if need be. Abraham has already entered into the covenant by faith in Genesis 15. But here his faith is shown to be a reality. When God says he will do certain things because Abraham has obeyed, God is saying that the covenant really will be fulfilled according to God's prior commitments because Abraham demonstrated the reality of his faith. In this way Genesis 22 aligns well with James 2. Abraham was justified by faith much earlier, as Genesis 15:6 attests, but in the sacrifice of Isaac, his works fulfilled this faith. The narrative does not allow the conclusion that Abraham merited the promises due to obedience or even to perfect faith. He sinned in chapter 20, in the very year that Sarah was to conceive. Nonetheless, God kept his covenant promise and Isaac was born in chapter 21.

[128] Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York Doubleday, 1980), 209; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah,* Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Nashville: Nelson, 1987), 36, 39.

[129] Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 73.

[130] "[T]he meaning 'go up from' for the verb *'ala*, at least in the sense of 'to depart,' does not make sense in this context. The verb may be used here in an agricultural sense, however, as in 'growing up' or 'increasing/flourishing' (Deut. 29:23 [MT 22], rather than in its more common geographical sense of departing. A positive agricultural connotation would make good sense in this context. Israel will sprout and flourish in the land. Furthermore, the use of the verb may be yet another Hosean pun. It may well imply a 'flourishing' for the people of an exodus-like scale." J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 105-6; cf. Garrett, 73.

say, the essence of the covenant with the patriarchs is the promise of the land."[131] Andrew Bonar observes, "Here we have, so to speak, a permanent fact, or truth, on which to rest the proof of Israel's restoration to their own land. It is this: the covenant with their fathers contained a grant of the land."[132] Future restoration to the land is also predicted in Deuteronomy's anticipation of the new covenant (30:3), and in Ezekiel's statement of the covenant (Eze. 36:33-36). Further, these promises are stated in such a way that it is difficult to apply them to other than ethnic Israel.

Though the Progressive Covenantalists are correct to observe that the phrase "unconditional" may not capture the complexity the Abrahamic covenant, their proposal does not best capture the actual complexity of that covenant. Nor does it reckon with the reality that the land promise will be fulfilled for a once disobedient but in-the-future repent nation.[133]

Conclusion

The argument of this paper as directed toward Progressive Covenantalists is that for clear exegetical reasons they should not pit the expansion of the land promise and the specific promise to Israel against each other. The way the argument has been framed, Progressive Covenantalists have not been asked to alter their view of typology or even alter their view that Israel plays no special role as a nation in the future. Primarily they are being asked to take more seriously the theme of nations in Scripture and to allow this theme to come to full fruition in the biblical storyline.

Adopting this paper's argument brings several advantages to Progressive Covenantalists. First, they are able to become more truly a mediating position between covenant theology and dispensationalism. While maintaining their distinctiveness, they open up an area of substantial agreement with dispensationalism. Second, in doing so they could pave the way for greater unity of thought about the land them among dispensationalists, covenant theologians, and those, like themselves, who hold to mediating positions. This would be an advance akin to the one promoted by Anthony Hoekema. Hoekema conceded that dispensationalists were correct to critique certain amillennialists for spiritualizing the Old Testament prophecies that predicted abundant fertility on the earth, long life for people, and harmony between among animal creation. Hoekema sees many of these promises fulfilled in the new creation.[134] Disagreements remain, but the greater agreement secured is nothing to be taken lightly.

The argument of this paper toward dispensationalists is that the proposal that the land theme of Scripture is expansive enough to encompass the entire new creation should not be dismissed as a distinctive of covenant theology or Progressive Covenantalism.[135] Affirming the expansion of the land promise to encompass the entire new creation need not be at odds with ethnic Israel receiving the precise land promised to it by God or with a special role for Israel in the future. The expansion of the land promise does not rest primarily in

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[131] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27,* Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2335.
[132] Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus* (1861; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1966), 491. Hartley says, "This phrase means that he will bring the survivors back to this land of promise in order that it might again be inhabited." John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard (Dallas: Word, 1992), 470.
[133] Richard Lucas argues that though Romans 11 promises the future salvation of Israel, it does not promise additional blessing. "The Dispensational Appeal to Romans 11 and the Nature of Israel's Future Salvation" in *Progressive Covenantalism*. This fails to take into account passages such as Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 30, and Ezekiel 36 in which the nation's repentance is tied to a restoration to the land.
[134] Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 275-86.
[135] From time stamps on my notes and email correspondence, it seems that my own thoughts on the land promise expanding to encompass the entire world developed in late 2010 and through 2011, prior to the publication of works by Progressive Covenantalists. My thoughts in this direction emerged through wrestling with passages that speak of Israel possessing the nations and through a study on the theme of land in Joshua.

typology but in explicit Old Testament promises that sit alongside the promises made to specifically to Israel. Thus both can and should be affirmed.

Adopting this paper's argument brings several benefits to dispensationalists. First, it enables them to place the land theme within the larger purposes of God. It clarifies why God would make land a central feature of his promises to Abraham. Second, it also contributes to unity with other brothers in Christ despite significant differences in other areas.

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