God's Revelation Through Time

Making Bible reading more meaningful

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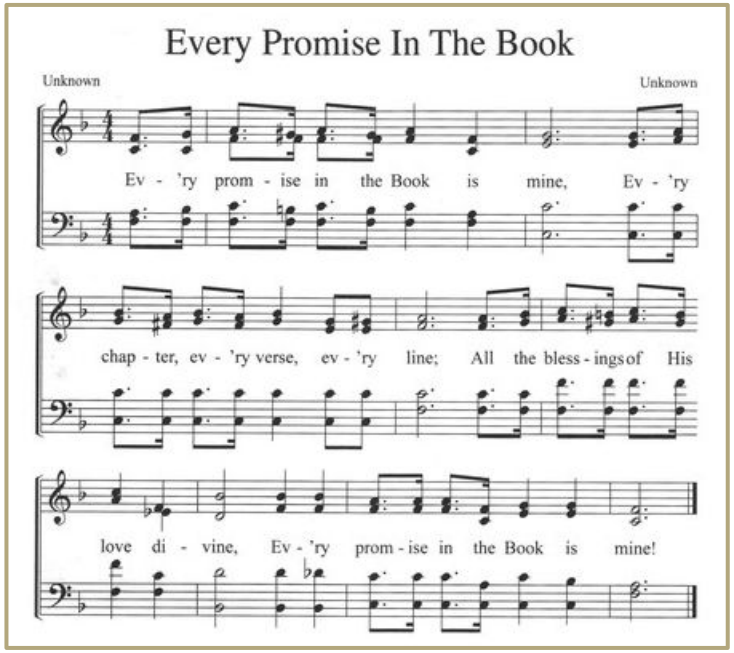
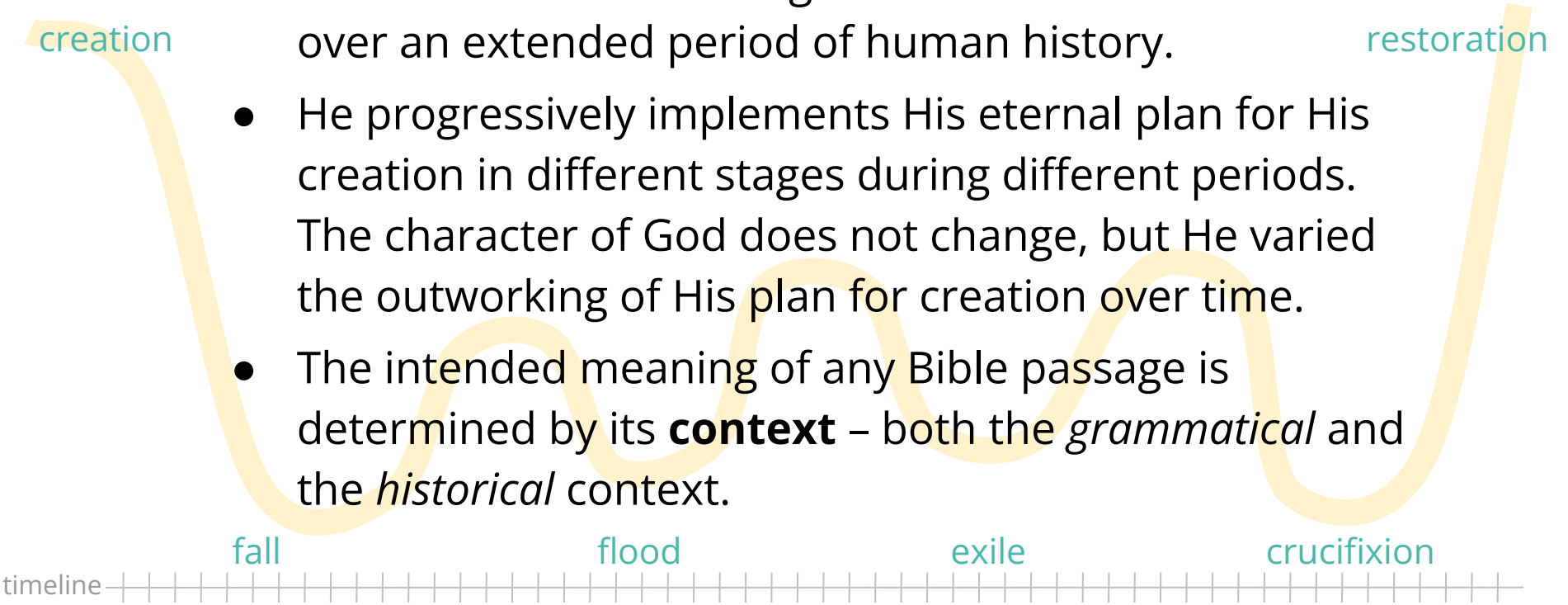
Is every promise in the Book mine?

- God communicated His Word using plain, normal human language which we can take at face value. The Bible communicates clear, straightforward thoughts. We should not go looking for secret codes or hidden meanings.
- God dealt with people in different ways at different times throughout human history.
- Every promise in the book is <u>not</u> necessarily mine.



God's Word was revealed progressively over time

- God revealed His message to mankind a little at a time over an extended period of human history.
- He progressively implements His eternal plan for His creation in different stages during different periods. The character of God does not change, but He varied the outworking of His plan for creation over time.
- The intended meaning of any Bible passage is determined by its **context** – both the *grammatical* and the *historical* context.

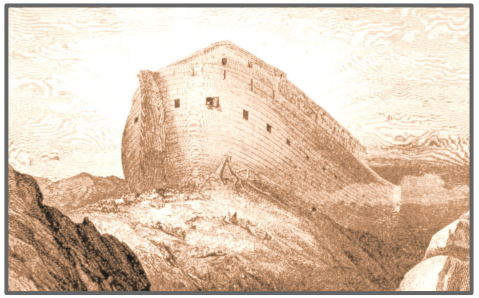


Creation and the Fall of humanity

- God created the universe in an orderly way, and everything came into being fully formed with the appearance of age. Adam and Eve had personal fellowship with their Creator.
- But they took something for themselves that God warned them not to seek. Instead of faith in God and obedience to His Word, they chose disobedience, independence, and autonomy.
- God revealed that there would be a future hope for redeeming and restoring creation (Gen 3:15).

The depths of sin and corruption

- All of Adam and Eve's children inherit their corrupt sin nature (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12).
- At one point in history, God *"rebooted"* humanity from a single faithful man (Noah), but this did not remove the fallen sin nature that every person still retains.
- Generation followed generation, with human depravity continually on display (Genesis 10 & 11).



Individual bright spots in the darkness of sin

- Some individuals did express faith in their Creator, including **Seth**, **Enoch**, and **Noah**. Such individuals were trusting their Creator for His promised redemption, while doing their best to live in obedience and dependence on God despite their sin nature.
- **Job** "was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1). He clearly believed God for redemption: "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another" (Job 19:25-27).

God makes a covenant with Abram

- Next God began to work on behalf of **Abram** who would prove to be devoted to God despite all of his own sinful failings.
- God made sweeping promises to Abram which would guarantee that the hope for a redeemer “born of a woman” (Gen 3:15) would be fulfilled in the future through one of Abram’s descendants.
- God’s covenant with Abram was unilateral, everlasting, and continually confirmed with his descendants through Isaac and Jacob (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-18; 22:15-18).
  God renamed him **Abraham** – “father of a multitude” (Gen 17:5).

God's promises to Abraham

God's **personal** promises to Abraham:

1. God's special care and provision during Abraham's life.
2. God would ensure Abraham's great reputation and name.
3. God would use Abraham as a channel of blessing to others.
4. God would give him a physical heir by his wife Sarah.

God's **national** promises to Abraham:

1. A nation would come from his descendants.
2. The land of Canaan would be given as an everlasting inheritance.
3. The covenant would continue to be honored with the nation, despite disobedience and failure on their part.

Covenant diagram

- God's **universal** promise to Abraham: *Blessings would be available to all mankind through Abraham.*
- God foretold that Abraham's children would be enslaved for four hundred years (Gen 15:13).

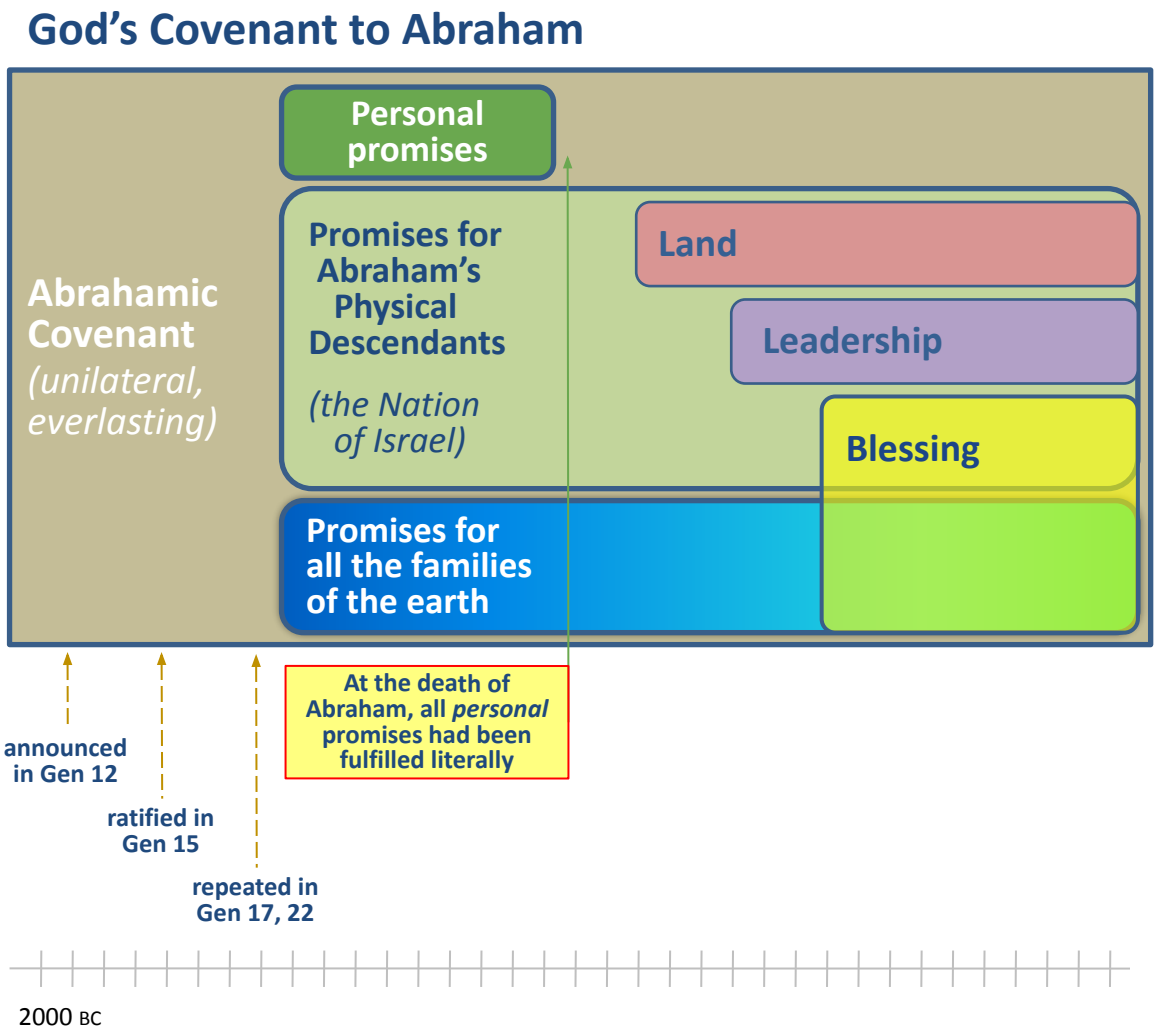


diagram #2

- God gave them Laws and began forming the Israelites' national identity.
- Moses, Joshua, Caleb, and the judges guided Israel as they moved into the land God had granted to them.

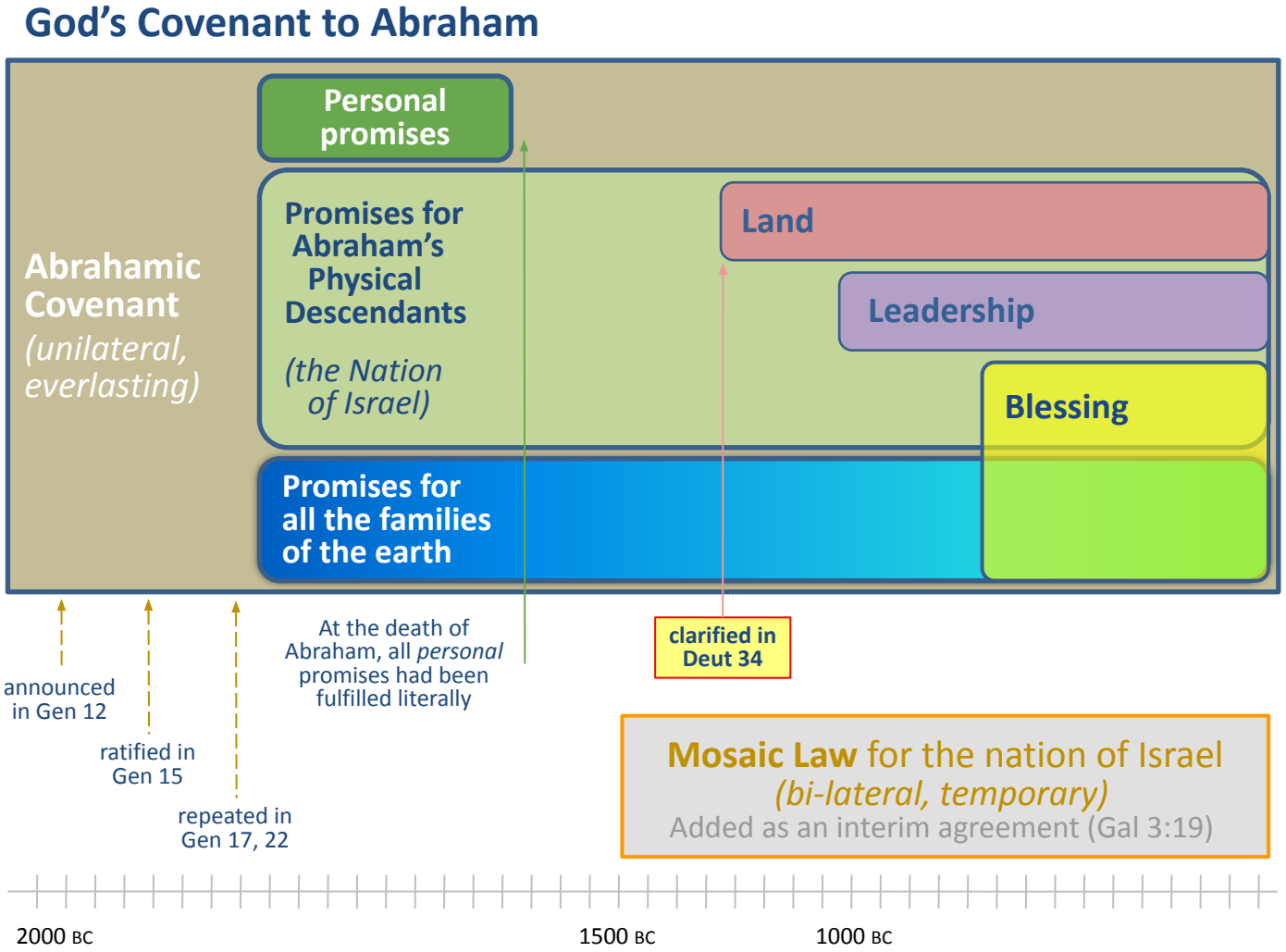


diagram #3

- God fulfilled His promise to Abraham that "kings will come forth from you" (Gen 17:6).
- God revealed to David that "Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam 7:16).

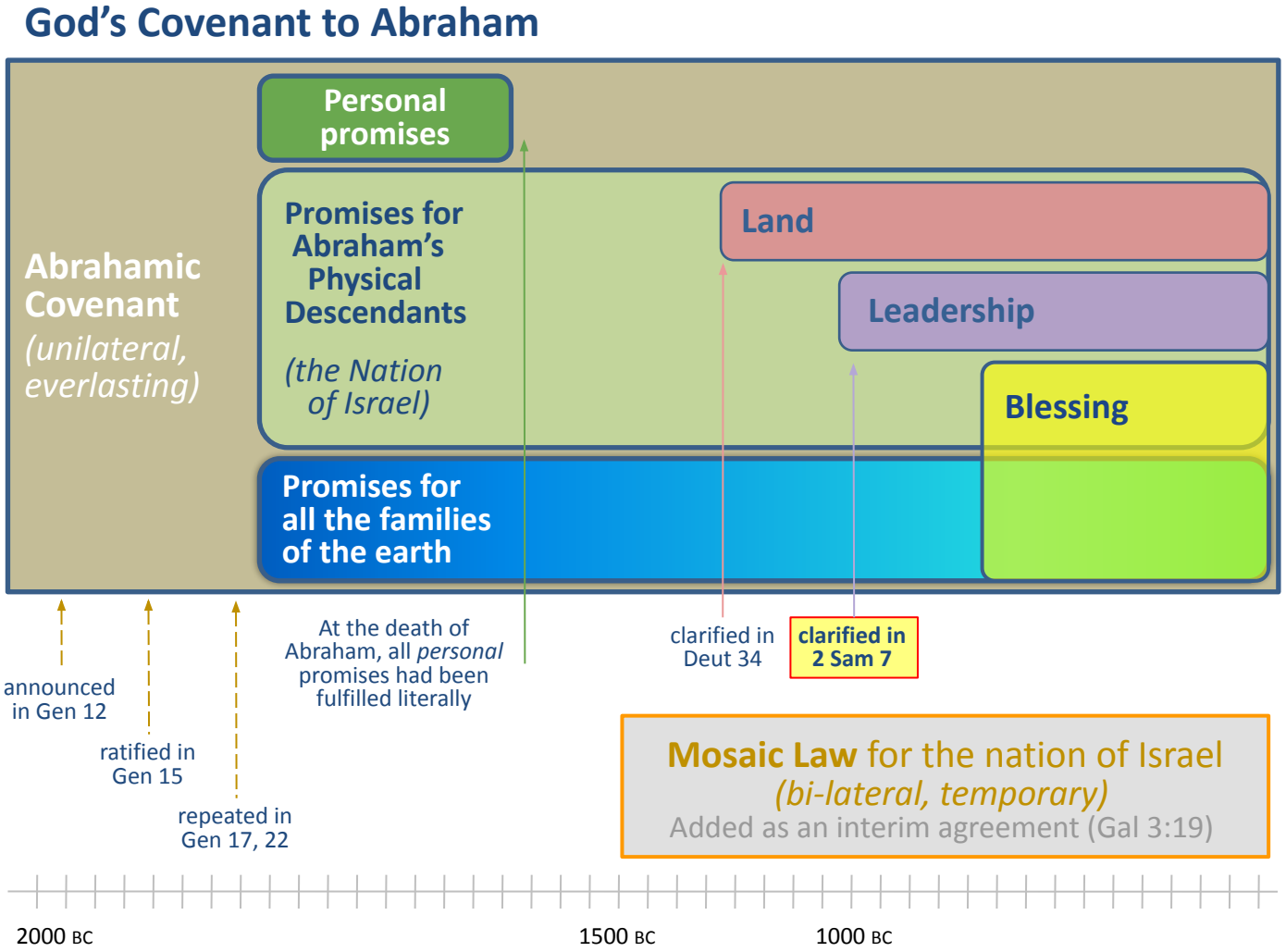
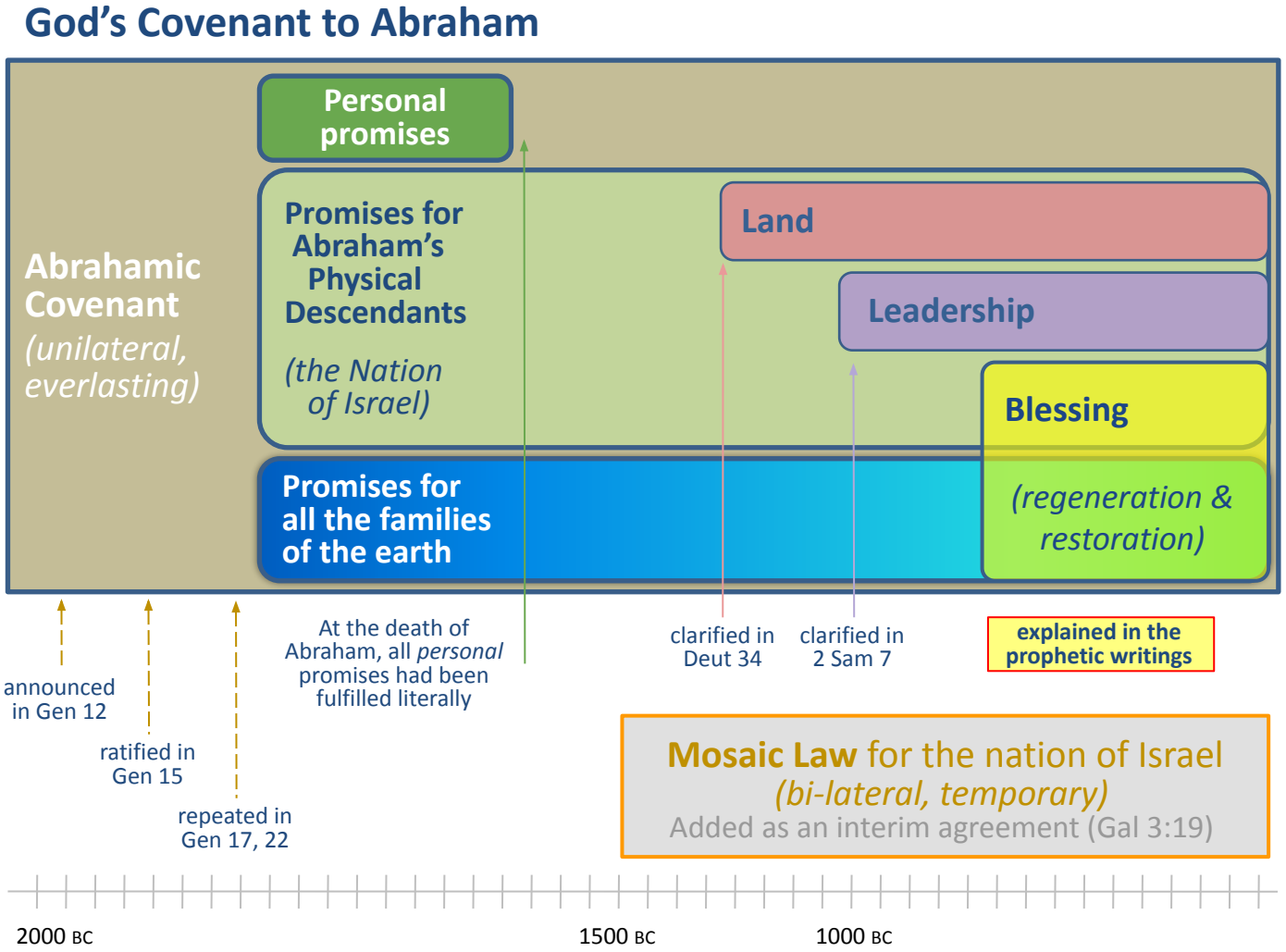


diagram #4

- The prophets spoke of the future glorious reign of the Messiah as **King**.
- But they also spoke of the suffering and rejection of their **Redeemer**.



Hope for the battle with sin

- Israel's prophets also provided hope for overcoming the inherent sin nature in humanity through regeneration and power of the Spirit of God living within every believer (e.g., Ezekiel 36:24-28).
- They also revealed that the blessing of regeneration was not for the Israelites alone. The promise of regeneration was available for believing Gentiles too (e.g., Isaiah 49:6).
- God ensured that the "blessing" aspect of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled exactly as promised for people of all nations who put their trust in God.

Continuity between the Old & New Testaments

- Old Testament revelation created the expectation that its promises would be fulfilled literally during the period covered by the New Testament.
- Jesus lived a completely righteous life according to the requirements of the Mosaic Law, proving Himself to be the spotless “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; 1 Pet 1:19).
- Christ’s first coming focused on His vicarious sacrifice as ***Redeemer***, rather than on His triumphant rule as ***King*** which will happen upon His return.

The offer of the kingdom

- The Old Testament ended with the unfulfilled expectation that God's promised Messiah would establish His kingdom on earth.
- When John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples began their public ministries they all declared, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:6-7). King Jesus was present among them, but Israel was required to *accept* God's chosen King (Deut 17:15).
- They were unwilling to accept Him and sought instead to kill Him (Matt 12:14). Israel's rejection of their King would become the means by which the **Redeemer** would accomplish the perfect atonement for the sins of humanity.

Three aspects of Jesus' teaching

- Jesus then began to teach His disciples privately and to share things that would occur *after* His death.
  - He would send His Holy Spirit with the unique ministry of indwelling those who place their faith in Christ (John 14:16-20).
  - Believers were to go into all nations to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8; 13:47).
- At various times God instituted new ways of dealing with people. The Mosaic Law was fulfilled in Christ. During the church age God will deal with people on the basis of His grace alone. Yet there will again be legal requirements in the future Messianic kingdom.

God's Covenant to Abraham

Abrahamic Covenant *(unilateral, everlasting)*

- **Personal promises**
- **Promises for Abraham's Physical Descendants** *(the Nation of Israel)*
- **Land**
- **Leadership**
- **Blessing** *(regeneration, restoration)*
- **Promises for all the families of the earth**
- **Church** (Jews + Gentiles)

Messianic Kingdom

Final Judgment & Eternal State

announced in Gen 12

ratified in Gen 15

repeated in Gen 17, 22

At the death of Abraham, all *personal* promises had been fulfilled literally

clarified in Deut 34

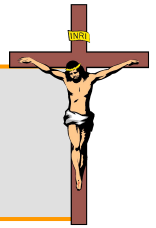
clarified in 2 Sam 7

explained in the prophetic writings

Tribulation

remaining Abrahamic promises all find literal fulfillment

Mosaic Law for the nation of Israel
(bi-lateral, temporary)
Added as an interim agreement (Gal 3:19)



2000 BC | 1500 BC | 1000 BC | 500 BC | AD 30 | AD 2000

Summary

- As we read the Bible we are tracing the outworking of God's plan for His creation through the ages.
- God revealed His Word to mankind a little at a time over an extended period of human history. God progressively implements His eternal plan in different stages during different periods.
- An accurate interpretation of Scripture requires understanding that the intended meaning of any Bible passage is determined by its context. This means not only a passage's grammatical context but also its historical context in God's revealed plan for the ages.