

## Abrahamic Faith: Studies & Principles In The Life of Abraham

Eastside Church of Christ • Adult VBS • June 1-15, 2015

### Monday: Abraham & The Covenant Promise

Tuesday: Abraham & The Faith

Wednesday: Abraham & The Law

Thursday: Abraham & The Seed Line

Friday: Abraham & The Covenant of Righteousness

### *Genesis 12*

#### 1. Genesis 12:1-7

- 12:1 ¶ Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” 4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. 6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.”

#### 1. This passage anticipates a covenant/promised based on:

- Anticipated righteousness (Friday night)
- Revelation of God’s word
- Promised reward
  - Spiritual blessings/dwarfing physical blessings
  - Abraham never saw/actually inherited the land, yet through faith realized/recognized something even greater - a heavenly city (cf. Heb 11)
  - Comparative evaluation of physical/spiritual (limited physical land > greater spiritual home)
- Anticipated rejection by the world
- Family/Religious division
- Faith/faithfulness
- Obedience
- Anticipated inclusion of all nations

#### 2. Interestingly, the promise of the Spirit is never expressly mentioned in Genesis 12 as a blessing either to Abraham, the Jewish nation, the Gentiles, or anyone else for that matter.

### *Genesis 15*

#### 1. Genesis 15:1-21 (read)

2. Abraham, so far is childless. He only has a steward as an heir.
3. God tells (reconfirms) Abraham that he will have a literal child of his own.
4. God emphasizes the certainty of the seed promise (initially singular), but prophetically predicting the multitudes of Abraham's descendants.
5. Abraham believed God.
6. God, not only recommitted to the seed promise, he recommitted to the land promise.
7. Abraham asked: "how shall I know that I will inherit it?"
8. Through the vision presented in context, God assured Abraham:
  - That his seed would exist
  - That they would go into a foreign land (Egypt)
  - That they would be delivered (under Moses' leadership)
  - That they would return to this land (under Joshua's leadership)
  - That they would come out of the foreign land with great possessions (part of the fulfillment of the "blessings" in Gen 12:1ff)
  - That the nation that held them captive (Egypt) would be judged
  - That Abraham would die in peace in his old age

### *Genesis 17*

1. Genesis 17:1-14
  - 17:1 ¶ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. 2 "And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 "Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." 9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 "He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. 13 "He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 "And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."
  - Genesis 17 has a strong covenant emphasis
  - That covenant emphasis includes blamelessness (see Friday)

- It includes great blessings.
- It includes a promise/strength/encouragement factor that's unique: my covenant will always be with you
- It includes a name change: Abram becomes Abraham (anticipation of a "new name" in Isaiah 65/66 and Acts 11); Sarai becomes Sarah
- It includes a promise of kings
- It repeatedly refers to the covenant as everlasting
- It includes the principle of sojourning/foreigner/stranger
- It includes God's continued promise to be "their" God (point: covenant continues past Abraham)
- It includes the sign of the covenant, circumcision. It's NT parallels with redemption by spiritual circumcision at the hands of Christ (Col 2:8ff), shows how powerful this sign was intended to be. So powerful, that it was easily confused, physically, as "salvation itself" under the law and by NT Judaizing teachers.
- In spite of it's OT/NT significance, we must be careful not to overload its intention/s falsely: it was only for males, it was primarily for children, and it was primarily for Jews (though later seen to be inclusive of others); these elements have no direct bearing on NT salvific restrictions anymore than the listings of tribes, males, virgins, etc., do in the context of Revelation 7 and 14 re the identity of the 144,000.

### *Acts 2*

1. The context of Acts 2 sets forth the criteria of God's redemptive scheme for all nations, in the fullest sense, for the first time.
  - 2:38 includes the imperative command to repent (2pp)
  - 2:38 includes the imperative command to be baptized (3ps; coextensive with 2pp; parallels Jesus' address to multitudes in his ministry, and to the churches of Asia/Rev2-3—to the church, as a whole, and then to individuals)
  - 2:41 includes the concept of faith—those that gladly received (cf. Jn 1:12)—are those that believed the message Peter presented concerning Christ. It was a message demonstrating that:
    - Christ's life and death fulfilled old testament prophecy (2:17ff)
    - Christ's life and death fulfilled God eternal plan of redemption (2:23)
    - Christ's life, teaching and miracles fulfilled old testament prophecy (Mt 11:4-5; Lk 4:18; 7:22; Is 35:5ff; 42:7ff)
    - Christ's life, teaching and miracles fulfilled God's attestation of Christ's deity (cf. Above refs)
    - Christ's death occurred in:
      - Fulfillment of the divine plan (2:23)
      - Concert with misunderstanding on the part of the Jews/Romans about Christ's identity and role (Acts 2: 1 Cor 2:9ff)
    - 2:47 observes that the church was in present tense, not future, existence (cf. Mt 3:1ff; 4:17ff; Acts 1:1-8)
  - 2:47 also indicates that salvation and addition/entrance (in) to the church was simultaneous

- Corollary: you cannot enter/be added to the church apart from salvation
- Corollary: you cannot obtain/receive salvation apart from entrance to/being added to the church
- 2:47 also indicates that salvation and addition/entrance (in) to the church was ultimately/ finally divine in origin
  - This is consistent with principles of God’s active role expressed throughout scripture, including specifically in the context of Acts 2
  - This is consistent with principles of man’s passive role expressed throughout scripture, including specifically in the context of Acts 2 (repentance in 2:38 is active imperative, indicating that the respondents must initiate the choice/decision to change their thinking leading to a change of habit; baptism in 2:38 is passive imperative, in effect saying that each individual (it’s 3ps) must allow themselves to be immersed—baptism is a passive/submissive act in that we/respondent allows someone else to act on them in “performing” baptism; be saved in 2:40 is passive imperative—**σώθητε** aor. imp. pass. s. v. 21. Pass. suggests, “let yourselves be saved,” “accept salvation” (Barrett)[The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament, Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. & Cleon L Rogers III]
- 2. The context of Acts 2, specifically verse 39, indicates a dramatic change in the unveiling of God’s redemptive plan as previously understood by the Jews
  - First century Jewish understanding of salvation ...
    - Was restricted to believing that they, and they alone, were God’s chosen people (in a salvation related sense)
    - Corollary: First century Jews, like Jonah, did not believe/want any non-Jews to be “chosen”/have salvation
    - Jesus’ discussions with the Jewish leaders often reflected this misunderstanding:
      - John 8:31ff - Jesus spoke about truth that would free from sin; Jew’s, claiming lineage with Abraham, said “we’ve never been in bondage,”; Jesus’ reference was bondage to sin, not physical bondage (Note: Israel had not enjoyed political/military autonomy since the fall of Judah in 606 BC); Jesus acknowledged their genealogical connection with Abraham, but pointed out that their father (spiritually) wasn’t Abraham, but the Devil)
      - John the baptizer encountered the same misunderstanding:
        - Mt 3:9 “and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.
  - That passage specifically addresses the salvation of Gentiles.
    - 39“For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”
      - You - immediate audience; all contemporary (1<sup>st</sup> century) Jews
      - Your children - descendants of the immediate audience; descendants of contemporary (1<sup>st</sup> century) Jews

- All who are afar off - in context, Acts 2 indicates that Jews were present from “every nation” (vs. 5), and then proceeds to list those nations (vs. 8ff). It’s possible to extend or re-emphasize this to apply to Jews from every part of the world, but that would have already been incorporated into the previous categories of “you” and “your children.” The “afar off” expression, in other new testament passages, is used with specific application to the Gentiles: cf. Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.; Eph. 2:17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.; Is. 57:19 “I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near,” Says the LORD, “And I will heal him.” ;
- “As many as the Lord our God will call” - indicates that the call to be obedient to the gospel would be extended beyond the Jewish nation; NT fulfillment of this is abundantly evident in Romans (grafting of the Gentiles); Acts (conversions from Cornelius on); Paul’s ministry (cf. Acts and his letters); and numerous passages that indicate the qualifications reflected in the call, etc.
- Old Testament Israel’s understanding of salvation:
  - Typified by Jonah (4:1ff)

### *Acts 10-11*

1. Peter, even in the context of Acts 2, most likely did not understand the teaching of 2:39
  - The audience: Jews from every nation
  - The occasion: Jewish feast of Pentecost
  - The occurrence: Spirit’s outpouring was a fulfillment of Joel (OT passage given to the Jews)
  - The speakers: All Jewish apostles
  - The evidence presented: All OT passages proving the deity of Christ
2. Peter, however, was later convinced of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s plan
  - Acts 10:1ff - the vision of Cornelius; send for Peter; he will tell you what you must do
  - Acts 10:9ff - the vision of Peter; Peter refused to eat what he considered unclean; God removed OT dietary restrictions but, more importantly, clearly indicated the inclusion of the Gentiles in his redemptive plan
  - Acts 10:24ff - Peter before Cornelius
    - Peter, according to the law, did not keep company with non-Jews (10:28)
    - God respects fear/reverence and righteousness from all nationalities (10:35)
    - Christ is Lord of all (10:36)
    - After the Spirit came upon Cornelius and household (Gentiles), Peter commanded baptism (10:44ff)
    - Peter, defending against Jewish Christian critics, convinced them that God granted the Gentiles repentance to life (11:18)

### *Galatians 3*

1. The gospel was preached to Abraham
  - Galatians 3:6-9

- Abraham's (pre-law) faith justified him ("it was accounted to him for righteousness")
- Abraham's spiritual descendants are sons "of faith," not flesh
- Abraham's spiritual descendants includes the justification, by faith, of the Gentiles
- This was part of the "gospel" preached in the old testament to/through Abraham
- It is included in the expression: "In you all the nations shall be blessed."
- Conclusion: All those who are of faith are blessed through/along with Abraham (all = Jews/Gentiles)

## 2. God's promise to Abraham still stands

- The blessing of Abraham (3:14; cf. Genesis 12, 15, 17, etal.) still stands (in Paul's day ... still in force today)
- The blessing of Abraham entailed that all nations would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (3:14)
- The blessing of Abraham, though it includes salvation/forgiveness of sins, includes all of God's (richest) blessings. Romans 8 asks the rhetorical question: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (8:32) Point: God has not only offered/delivered up his son, he as also given us, freely, all things. Everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3) ... all things.
- In the context of Galatians 3, the most significant aspect of God's visible/physical/spiritual blessings involved the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, inclusive of (but not wholly identical with) the indwelling of the Spirit.
- Paul asked questions relative to the Spirit in Galatians to force answers:
  - Did the Spirit come to you by the law? (3:2) [Obvious answer: NO]
  - Or by the hearing of faith? (3:2) [Obvious answer: YES]
  - If you began in the Spirit (which they did, 3:3), are you perfected (now) through the flesh (3:3)? [YES, they began in the Spirit, but NO, they were not perfect now through the flesh]
  - The supply of the Spirit and the working of miracles, does it come by works of the law (3:5) [Obvious answer: NO]
  - Or does it come by the hearing of faith? (3:5) [Obvious answer: YES]
- Paul's point in all of this:
  - Abraham's promise/covenant included (additional dimension added on Friday):
    - Land
    - Seed
    - Blessings
  - The seed is fulfilled through Christ (3:16 - to be presented on Thursday)
  - The blessings came through the associations/disassociations that Israel received in the OT (Egyptians spoiled them; gifts to Solomon, etc.).
  - But the blessings under consideration in this context is the blessing of the most significant outpouring of God, that of God himself in the person of the Spirit, given to those who are obedient to the gospel of Christ

- That the Spirit would come upon the apostles, as unique and wonderful as that was — not to mention its OT/NT prophetic fulfillment/s — was only the beginning of God’s outpouring
- Joel anticipated the coming of the Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28-32)
- Peter quoted that passage and said that at that time — the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 — Joel’s prophecy was being fulfilled
- That fulfillment included the promise alluded to in Acts 2:39, a promise that would later be shown to apply to Gentiles as well as Jews)
- The incredible summation of God’s mystery in 1 Timothy 3:16 — “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.” — includes not only the truth of the incarnation of Christ, it also notes that the Gentiles would be included as part of God’s eternal plan.
- That inclusion was not just that they would be saved/forgiven of sins, but that they would enjoy the fullest demonstration of God’s blessing including the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cf. Cornelius and his household in Acts 10-11), as well as the indwelling of the Spirit as earnest (Ephesians 1:12-13)
- This is part of Christ’s preaching focus: Mt 12:18 states “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.” The inclusion of the Gentiles was a major signifier of Christ’s Messiahship.
- Note also, that in Eph 1:12-13, that the Spirit is referred to as the “Holy Spirit of promise.” The full text says: “11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

*Additional passages/principles to consider:*

3. Jesus’ parables/teachings/public minister

- re money at the end of the day
- Samaritans as “heroes” (leper, “good” Samaritan)
- Jesus’ reference to Samaritans as heroes
- Jesus’ ministry: Its start in Zebulun and Naphtali
- Jesus’ ministry: Based/started in Galilee of the Gentiles
- Jesus’ ministry: His controversy with the Jewish leaders
- Jesus’ ministry: His aid to/defense of the downtrodden (Gentiles, lepers, demon-possessed, publicans, tax-collectors, questionable women, etc.
- The NT references to the inclusion of the Gentiles are too numerous to cite here.

4. Paul’s apostleship

- His commission/mission: An apostle to the Gentiles
- His methodology: First to the Jews (synagogues), then to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; Gal 3:1ff)
- His adversaries: Judaizing teachers (binding circumcision) (Galatians)
- His teaching: re grace, the Spirit, the promise, the guilt of sin under the law, the purpose of the law, the nature of faith (e.g., Abraham) (Romans, Galatians)

5. Broad OT prophecy

- Is. 2:2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.
- Is. 5:26 He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, And will whistle to them from the end of the earth; Surely they shall come with speed, swiftly.
- Zech. 6:15 Even those from afar shall come and build the temple of the LORD. Then you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God."
- Isaiah 66: 19 "I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. 20 "Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. 21 "And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the LORD. 22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. 23 And it shall come to pass That from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD.