

## Father Abraham

*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get out of your country, and from your family, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you: And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses thee: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed. Gen 12:1-3*

*Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your seed be." And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:5-6*

As we come to the life of Abraham in Genesis 12-25, we discover a man who is revered by Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike. But I am afraid that those who have the greatest interest in Abraham spiritually have, perhaps, the least interest cognitively. In light of the New Testament, and especially the commentaries of the Apostle Paul concerning Abraham, I believe most Christians have a very shallow appreciation for this Old Testament patriarch. It is true that they may have a great knowledge of him as the "Father of the Jews", and as a focal point of "end-time prophecy". But with this emphasis I fear that the true blessing of Abraham is usually missed.

Few can ignore Paul's plain exposition of the Abrahamic Covenant's promised *Seed*; but this seems to be presented by many as just an appendage to the *real* core of the covenant. In other words, the covenant promises are divided up into different applications, with earthly promises having the greatest focus. However, there is not the slightest hint of such division in Paul's teaching of the covenant. Combining the information of chapters 12, 15, 17, et al, let's look at the primary elements of the promise.

God promised Abraham that He would make his name great; his descendants would be numerous as the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens; he would be a father of many nations; in his *seed* all the nations of the world would be blessed; and he would inherit a land. In chapter 15, God unilaterally "cuts covenant" with Abraham, unconditionally securing the promise by His own Being. He then gives Abraham the sign of the covenant - circumcision.

Now, no one denies that the covenant promise had its temporal implications in one form or another. Abraham's name has surely been made great in the earth. His earthly descendants are found in every portion of the world, making him truly the father of many nations. Contrary to much teaching today, his descendants, through the line of Isaac and Jacob, *did* inherit all the land promised them. Under Solomon, the Jewish kingdom extended from the river Euphrates, to the river of Egypt ( *1Kings 4:20-21, 24; 2Chron 9:26*). The wording in the *1Kings* passage is a direct reference to the Abrahamic Covenant, especially Gen 15:18 & 21:17.

But the bigger question is, are the *earthly promises* of blessing and greatness what motivated Abraham on in his often difficult pilgrimage? The writer of Hebrews tells us plainly that he was waiting *for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10)*. He *and* his descendants, as numerous as the stars and the sand (*vs 12*),

*all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16).*

In Hebrews 11:39, Abraham is included in the "all these" *who, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (i.e. receive the covenant promises)*. Jesus said that, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (*John 8:56*).

Can anyone truly believe that Abraham had his heart set upon inheriting a tract of land in the Middle East, and will be gravely disappointed when he, in Christ, inherits the whole world, and the universe it occupies... eternally? (*Romans 4:13-18; 8:19-22; Matt 5:5*)?

But where does this leave earthly Israel? I have tremendous respect and appreciation for all Jews

“according to the flesh”. Through them came the promises and the revelations of God. Through them has come the *Promised Seed*. I believe that God, having brought his Son into the world through them, will honor them with a great harvest in Christ before the final Day (*Rom 11:25-28... Perhaps already begun*). But there is a vast difference between a *means* through which God fulfills a promise, and the promise itself. The promise is, and always has been, infinitely greater than earthly blessings. It is, and always has been, to those who *believe* in the promised *Seed*, and *it is accounted to them for righteousness* (*Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3*).

Here is the whole point of circumcision, the sign of the covenant? Abraham received circumcision as a *sign* of the righteousness which comes by faith (*Romans 4:3, 11*). Paul makes it clear that circumcision was a type, a symbol, of a *purified seed*, whose hearts were purified by faith. *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.* (*Romans 2:28-29*). All who are such are the true *Israel of God* (*Galatians 6:16*).

It is interesting to note that, though the fulfilling of the covenant (in Christ) would come through the lineage of Isaac and Jacob, circumcision was *not* reserved to Isaac, alone. Ishmael, and all the “foreign” servants of Abraham’s household were to be circumcised (*Gen 17:10-13*). In Abraham, Jew and gentile alike were to be blessed. In his Seed, there is *neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.* (*Galatians 3:28*).

And so, it is in Christ and the *New Covenant in Him*, that *all* the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are fulfilled. *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” So then those who are of faith **are blessed with believing Abraham...** For, *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), **that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.****

Are you “in Christ”? Then you may legitimately call Abraham your father. In fact, (with no disrespect intended to others) perhaps we should call Abraham, “*the father of New Covenant Theology.*”

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## Death... Friend or Foe?

It has been my privilege and blessing over the past few months to be engaged with dying saints, and to officiate at the funerals of those who have now passed on. In the midst of the very real pain and sorrow that the separation of death brings to those “left behind”, the greater blessing has come from the testimony of those facing their own death. Death to them was (and to those still with us, is) a sweet and longed for passage home to be with their beloved Lord. So strong, this reality, that some have earnestly prayed for death, *not* to escape their own suffering, but, in the words of one, “I just want to see Him, and hear Him say my name.”

The Bible does call death “*the last enemy*” (*1Cor 15:26*). Godly men wept for Steven (*Acts 8:2*). This life, even in a fallen world with a corruptible body, is a precious gift with which we are to glorify God, and demonstrate His love. But, when it comes to our own *appointed* “day of departure”, we should say with the apostle, *I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better* (*Phil 1:12*); and, *Yes, we are of good courage, and willing rather to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord* (*2Cor 5:8*).

- ejr3

## There Is a Fountain Wm. Cowper

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.  
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood

Lose all their guilty stains.  
E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.  
And shall be till I die, and shall be till I die;  
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.  
Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing Thy power to save,  
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.  
Lies silent in the grave, lies silent in the grave;  
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave

- T&DW

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Are there topics or questions you would like to see addressed in a future T&DW? Please submit them to  
pastored@springwoodchapel.com

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### ***The Timbrel & Dance Weekly***

#### ***Praise Him with the timbrel and dance. (Psalm 105:4)***

*In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,  
And my heart it doth dance at the sound of His name. Spurgeon*

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Pastor Ed Ross, Springwood Chapel,  
2360 Springwood Road, York, Pennsylvania 17402.  
Phone: 717-741-3616*

*Email: [pastored@springwoodchapel.com](mailto:pastored@springwoodchapel.com)*

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