

ABRAHAM'S PROMISED INHERITANCE: -

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied all emphasis throughout this Study Document.

- The Lord repeated a number of times to the patriarch Abraham the promise that he and his descendants would eventually inherit a place for an everlasting possession.
"Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Genesis 12:7).

"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." (Genesis 13:14 & 15.)

"I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8).

- The Lord repeated this promise to the patriarch Isaac, *"unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries"* (Genesis 26:3).

The Lord also repeated it to the patriarch Jacob, *"the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed"* (Genesis 28:13).

- Abraham never received this inheritance personally during his lifetime, as Stephen made clear in his defence before the Sanhedrin, *"he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not [so much as] to set his foot on"* (Acts 7:5).

Abraham with his immediate descendants Isaac and Jacob who were fellow heirs of the same promise, never received any part of this promised inheritance, *"by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as [in] a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise"* (Hebrews 11:9); *"these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of [them], and embraced [them]"* (Hebrews 11:13).

- This promise by the Lord is applied by the apostle Paul not merely to the land of Canaan, but *"that he should be the heir of the world"*; this promise not only applied to Abraham himself, but also *"to his seed"* (Romans 4:13).

This promised inheritance must refer to the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, because Paul has written concerning Abraham, *"he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God."* (Hebrews 11:10.)

Not only did the patriarch Abraham look for the heavenly city as being his ultimate inheritance, but all the patriarchs who were fellow heirs with him of the same promise did as well, *"But now they desire a better [country], that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."* (Hebrews 11:16.)

It is not the earthly Mount Sion that the righteous are to look towards, but to *"mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"* (Hebrews 12:22). That is why the apostle Paul focuses our minds not upon the earthly Jerusalem, but upon the *"Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all"* (Galatians 4:26).

It is to this heavenly city that Jesus was going to go to at his ascension, so that he would “prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also.” (John 14:2 & 3.)

The promised inheritance must also have reference to the “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13), where the New Jerusalem will eventually rest upon having descended out of heaven to this earth, which fact has been recorded for us by the prophet John in the book of Revelation, “the city of my God, [which is] new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God” (Revelation 3:12).

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:2.)

“that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:10).

- When the New Jerusalem finally descends to this earth as its eternal resting place, then will the patriarchs be able to look upon the reality of what they looked forward to by faith during their earthly sojourns, and to the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham by the Lord, “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” (Genesis 17:8).

“Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God.” (Revelation 21:3.)

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM AND THE PROMISED INHERITANCE: -

- The Lord promised Abraham concerning the multitude of his descendants, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” (Genesis 15:5.)

The Lord made this promise to Abraham while he was “childless” (Genesis 15:2); Abraham said to the Lord at this time, “to me thou hast given no seed” (Genesis 15:3).

Abraham’s response was one of simple faith that the Lord would fulfil his word, and it has been recorded concerning Abraham’s faith at this time, “And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6.)

- Abraham and his wife Sarah had to wait a long time for the Lord to fulfil his promise to them concerning the promised son Isaac. We have it recorded for us in the Scriptures, that their faith failed to endure this delay, when Sarah asked Abraham to take her maidservant Hagar to procreate an heir through her. Abraham yielded to Sarah’s wishes, and the result proved disastrous, and in no way was the fulfilment of the Lord’s promised heir to Abraham (See Genesis 16).

But after learning the lesson of patience and faith that the Lord was endeavouring to teach him, the Lord finally fulfilled his promise to Abraham, and the apostle Paul records it for us in the book of Romans in these words which emphasis Abraham’s faith in God’s ability to fulfil his word to him,

“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” (Romans 4:19-22.)

“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.” (Hebrews 11:11.)

- God's promise, *"that he should be the heir of the world"*, was to be fulfilled to Abraham and his seed *"through the righteousness of faith"* (Romans 4:13).

Paul has recorded for us that *"God gave" the inheritance "to Abraham by promise"* (Galatians 3:18).

- Abraham's example of simple faith in the Lord's ability to fulfil his word, makes him *"the father of all them that believe"*, in order *"that righteousness might be imputed unto them also"* (Romans 4:11).

Abraham is the spiritual father of those *"who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which [he had] being [yet] uncircumcised"* (Romans 4:12).

WHO ARE THE SEED OR DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM?

- Many people often read the Scriptures that refer to Abraham's seed and understand them to be referring to the literal physical descendants of Abraham, who we know today as the children of Israel or the Jews. But such is not the teaching of the apostle Paul in the New Testament in his epistle to the Romans.

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:28 & 29.)

This teaching from the apostle Paul was not a new teaching at all concerning a true Jew being someone who is circumcised in the heart and not in the flesh. The prophet Jeremiah described *"all the house of Israel"* in his day as being *"uncircumcised in the heart"* (Jeremiah 9:26).

The inspired deacon Stephen referred to the unbelieving Jews of his day as being *"stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears"*, who *"always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers [did]"* (Acts 7:51).

That the fleshly forefathers of the Jews in Stephen's day had indeed resisted the Holy Spirit we are left in no doubt by the prophet Isaiah, when he wrote concerning them that *"they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit"* (Isaiah 63:10).

The prophet Moses exhorted the children of Israel to *"circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."* (Deuteronomy 10:16.)

What does the expression "stiffnecked" really indicate? The following passages give us a very clear understanding of what this term means.

Nehemiah has recorded concerning the children of Israel that they *"hardened their neck, and would not hear"* (Nehemiah 9:29).

Jeremiah recorded the following very simple descriptions of the children of Israel's hardening their necks in the following words,

"Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck" (Jeremiah 7:26).

"But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction." (Jeremiah 17:23.)

It would appear therefore from the last few passages, that the children of Israel's being stiffnecked meant their stubborn refusal to listen to or hear the words or instructions of the Lord; and coupled with their resisting of the Holy Spirit, this disqualified them in the days of Jeremiah and Stephen from being the true seed of Abraham. It

cancelled out their physical circumcision as far as the Lord was concerned, for them to be considered as Abraham's true descendants.

- The apostle Paul teaches us concerning the uncircumcised person that *"if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?"* (Romans 2:26.)
- In fact, Paul has addressed this very issue for us concerning who are really Abraham's promised seed in the following words, *"They which are the children of the flesh, these [are] not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed"* (Romans 9:8).
- The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatians identifies Abraham's seed or descendants as being those *"which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham"* (Galatians 3:7).

Further on in this same chapter he identifies Abraham's true descendants in the following words, *"if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Galatians 3:29).

- Our Lord Jesus Christ himself stated to the Jews of his day, *"if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham"* (John 8:39). This statement from Jesus makes the reality of being Abraham's descendant as not relying on a profession of faith in Christ only, but it makes a person's claim to be Abraham's seed dependent upon their works being the same as were the works of the godly patriarch Abraham.

WHAT WERE THE WORKS OF ABRAHAM AS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES?

- Nehemiah has recorded the fact concerning Abraham, that the Lord *"foundest his heart faithful before thee"* (Nehemiah 9:8).

God himself described Abraham as being a person who *"obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws"* (Genesis 26:5).

Abraham's faith produced obedience to God's Commandments and Laws, just as the apostle Paul himself taught, *"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."* (Romans 3:31.)

God pronounced a blessing upon him, *"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which [is] upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies"* (Genesis 22:17). *"Because thou hast obeyed my voice",* the Lord promised to Abraham that *"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 22:18).

This last promise made by the Lord to godly Abraham is recognized by the inspired apostle Paul as the Lord through the scripture *"preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [saying], In thee shall all nations be blessed"* (Galatians 3:8).

It was in reality a promise of the coming of Abraham's seed whom Paul identifies as being *"thy seed, which is Christ"* (Galatians 3:16).

Abraham's *"obedience of faith"* (Romans 16:26) has been upheld before us as being of the true kind of faith that can save us by the apostle James, when he refers to Abraham's obedience to the Lord's command to offer up his only son Isaac upon the altar.

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (James 2:21 & 22).

For his obedience to the voice of the Lord, Abraham *“was called the Friend of God”* (James 2:23). In fact, the Lord referred to Abraham as *“my friend”* (Isaiah 41:8); and when king Jehoshaphat prayed to the Lord he referred to Abraham as *“thy friend”* (2 Chronicles 20:7). What higher honour could a mere mortal have than to be known as *“the Friend of God”*?

☞ Jesus himself has promised an entrance into the inheritance of the New Jerusalem for commandment-keepers. These people are the true seed of Abraham: -

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”
(Revelation 22:13 & 14.)