

END-TIMES ISSUES

#26 Abrahamic covenant – offspring and blessings (2).

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Different issues in the Abrahamic covenant(s).

The BASIS of the covenant.

1. LAND issues.
2. OFFSPRING, "seed."
3. A general focus on BLESSINGS (and cursings).
4. A special focus on WORLDWIDE BLESSINGS. (This includes what Jesus would do.)

Then the LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:1-3 (BSB)

[TODAY] (Continued from last week.)

Last week's observations about the "people promises."

- ➔ Promise #① – Many descendants/offspring. (Focus = *individuals*.)
 - **All 3 patriarchs were told:** An uncountable number of offspring.
 - **N.T. emphasis:** All who have *Abraham's* type of faith are counted as *Abraham's* offspring; includes Gentiles.
- ➔ Promise #② – Nation(s), kings coming from them. (Focus = *groups*.)
 - **Abraham:** Made into a great nation; father of many nations; kings.
 - **Isaac:** Two nations – referring to Jacob and Esau.
 - **Jacob:** A company/multitude of peoples/nations; kings – probably referring to the 12 tribes and the kings who would rule over them.
 - **N.T. emphasis:** *Abraham* is the father of those who have his type of faith; includes people from the Gentile *nations*.
- ➔ OBSERVATIONS ABOUT OFFSPRING (Promises # ① & ②).
 - The promises given to *Abraham* include both *physical* and *spiritual* descendants. The promises given to *Isaac* and *Jacob* seem to focus on just their *physical* descendants.

- ➔ Promise #③ – Blessings for all other peoples/nations.
 - **All 3 patriarchs were told:** All families/nations of the earth will be blessed "through *your offspring*." (Appears to refer to a *specific individual* – who in the N.T., we recognize as *Jesus*.)
 - **Abraham and Jacob were also told:** ... blessed "through *you*" (specifically referring to *Abraham* and *Jacob*).
 - **N.T. emphasis:** A focus on Christ (the specific offspring who is the source of *eternal* blessings); blessings even for the Gentiles.
- ➔ OBSERVATIONS ABOUT BLESSING OTHER NATIONS (Promise # ③).
 - All 3 patriarchs are told that their *offspring* will be a blessing for all nations. The N.T. tells us that this refers to Jesus Christ.
 - In addition, we read that worldwide blessings will also be through *Abraham* and *Jacob* – not just through their *offspring*.

God offered Israel a glorious calling.

- They threw it away. They chose to follow the ways of the world, instead of the ways of God.

Now if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you will be My treasured possession ... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

THEY DIDN'T DO THIS.

Exodus 19:5a, 6b (BSB)

- Prophetic passages tell us that they will someday fulfill that calling. But it will only be under the *New Covenant*, which changes the *heart*. (This means only *saved* Jews will be included. And under the *New Covenant*, *saved* Gentiles will also be included.)
- Here is the glorious calling we have under the *New Covenant*:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9 (BSB)

➔ Blessings through JACOB? (Through the nation of Israel.)

- ➔ Israel will be a blessing. The result? Nations will turn to God!

Just as you, Judah and Israel, have been a curse among the nations, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing. ... And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him.

Zechariah 8:13a, 22 (NIV)

- Before that can happen, Israel, *as a nation*, must first turn to God.

"And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'

When God raised up his servant [Jesus], he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

Acts 3:25-26 (NIV)

AS A NATION, THIS HASN'T YET HAPPENED. (MOST REJECTED THE OFFER.)

(God is still at work, using saved individuals to accomplish his will.)

⇒ **Isaiah tells us that all nations will one day come to Jerusalem to learn God's ways.**

In the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and **all nations** will stream to it.

And **many peoples** will come and say:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths."

Isaiah 2:2-3a (BSB); see also vs. 3b-5.

• As a result, there is coming a day in which ...

... the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:9b (NIV)

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⇒ **The apostle Paul tells us some things about Israel's future that point to both judgment and a glorious final outcome.**

❖ He supports his statements by quoting O.T. Scripture. His quotes are often summaries of several verses. (His main concern is the over-all message of the passage – and he communicates it accurately.)

① **Only a remnant of Israel is going to be saved.**

"Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the **remnant** will be saved.

For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality."

Romans 9:27-28 (NIV); based on Isaiah 10:20-23.

• The Isaiah passage speaks of a judgment of destruction, and the concept of "remnant" is emphasized several times. The word "saved" (Romans 9:27) refers to genuine salvation – as does the Isaiah passage, which describes them as people who "return" to God (= repentance) and who "truly rely" on him (= faith/trust).

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② **Only a remnant of Israel will still be alive at that point in time.**

- This is actually an expression of *grace* – God's undeserved kindness.
- Though Israel *deserved* the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, God would spare some.
- *He had spared some* during other judgments ("previously," according to Paul), and *he would do it again.*

It is just as Isaiah said previously:

"Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

Romans 9:29 (NIV); based on Isaiah 1:9.

↳ These "descendants" are the "remnant" – the *saved* Israelites, mentioned in the previous verses. Since this remnant represents the *only* survivors, it means they are *all* saved. So Paul can say...

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③ **At some point in the future, all Israel (= the "remnant" that is still alive) will be saved!**

... **all Israel will be saved.** As it is written:

"The **deliverer** will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my **covenant** with them when I take away their sins."

Romans 11:26b-27 (NIV); based on Isaiah 59:20-21 .

QUESTION #1 – What "covenant" is being mentioned? This verse points to the New Covenant, under which God changes people's *hearts*, so they have an *internal* desire to follow God. Several of the prophets (including Moses) mention this covenant – whether a direct description of it, or a description of its effects. Here are some Old Testament passages that focus on this covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:38-40; Deuteronomy 30:6; Isaiah 59:21; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:25-27. This is also the focus of the New Testament.

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QUESTION #2 – Who is the "deliverer" ("redeemer" in Isaiah 59)?

This is a reference to Jesus Christ – the one who's blood (= sacrifice of himself on the cross) brought us the New Covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 9:15; 12:24).

- **How do we know that it is a reference to Jesus?** The N.T. often links together Jesus and God's promise to Abraham: "Through *your offspring* all nations of the earth will be blessed" – Genesis 22:18. But that promise was only the beginning of *centuries* of further revelation about the Messiah. Abraham did not know all the details; but by the end of the Old Testament, there was an eager expectation that the deliverer – the Messiah – would soon come.
- **Then why did most in Israel reject Jesus?** They wanted a Messiah who would solve their *short-term* problems (the Roman occupation of their land), rather than *long-term* problems (their sin and alienation from God). Because of this, they *ignored* the Scripture passages that did not fit their expectations. (Jesus accomplished what the people *needed*, not what they *wanted*.)

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④ **So how does all this result in Israel being a blessing for the nations?**

- Because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah, God has opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles. The Jewish rejection of Jesus brought blessings ("spiritual riches") to the world. And when they turn back to God (= changed hearts, under the New Covenant), it will result in even further blessings!

But if their transgression means **riches** for the world, and their loss means **riches** for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but **life from the dead**?

Romans 11:12, 16 (NIV)

- "All Israel" will return after the "full number" of the Gentiles are saved.

Israel has experienced a hardening in part **until the full number of the Gentiles** has come in, ...

Romans 11:25b (NIV)

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⇒ Any connection between Israel and the blessings of other nations does not remove the responsibility that those other nations have.

THEY MUST... LEARN THE WAYS OF THE LORD... ...AND BOAST IN THE LORD.

And many nations will come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. **He will teach us His ways**, so that we may walk in His paths."

For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:2 (BSB)

"If you, Israel, will return, ... then the nations will invoke blessings by him and **in him they will boast.**"

Jeremiah 4:1a, 2b (NIV)

❖ This will occur under the New Covenant!

"On that day **many nations** will join themselves to the LORD, and **they will become My people**. I will dwell among you, and you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent Me to you."

Zec 2:11 (BSB)

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⇒ Blessings through ABRAHAM? (Main focus: *spiritual* blessings.)

"... and all the families of the earth will be blessed **through you.**"

Genesis 12:3b (BSB)

- Blessings through Abraham would include any *physical* blessings related to the nation Israel. But the main focus that is associated with Abraham has to do with *spiritual* blessings.
- Spiritual blessings have always been the goal of this covenant, *even in the presence of material/physical blessings.*

REQUIREMENT

"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and **through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed**. For I have chosen him, so that **he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD** by doing what is right and just, **in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has promised.**"

Genesis 18:18-19 (BSB)

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⇒ The *physical* aspect of the blessings has value... but it's not enough by itself.

- Being a *physical* descendant of Abraham has value (as seen below) ... but having these blessings does NOT save a person!

What, then, is the advantage of being a Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. First of all, they have been **entrusted with the very words of God.**

Romans 3:1-2 (BSB)

... the people of Israel. Theirs is the **adoption as sons**; theirs the **divine glory** and the **covenants**; theirs the giving of the **law**, the **temple worship**, and the **promises**. Theirs are the **patriarchs**, and from them proceeds the **human descent of Christ**, who is God over all, forever worthy of praise! Amen.

Romans 9:4-5 (BSB)

- We also lose all our material blessings when we die.

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⇒ Without the *spiritual* blessings, any connection to Abraham is ended at death.

- Consider the following dialogue between Jesus and his opponents. Here, we see both the *physical* connection and the *spiritual* connection to Abraham. (His opponents did not have the *spiritual* connection.)

PHYSICAL OFFSPRING

"We are **Abraham's descendants**," they answered.

[Jesus replied,] "I know you are **Abraham's descendants**, ..."

SPIRITUAL OFFSPRING

"**Abraham is our father**," they replied.

"If you were **children of Abraham**," said Jesus, "you would do the works of Abraham. ... You are doing the works of your father. ... **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out his desires."

John 8:33a, 37a, 39, 41a, 44a (BSB)

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How do we get these spiritual blessings?

- The requirement has never changed. People need to **trust** God. The fruit of this trust will be a willingness to **rely** on God and a desire to **obey** God.
- In the Old Testament, God offered to change anyone who was willing to seek him. It is the same today; but being under the New Covenant, the New Testament provides more details about the *heart-change* that God embeds within his people.
- Ultimately, these blessings are available because of what *Jesus* accomplished on our behalf – exchanging our sin with his righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). They are attainable only through Abraham's "seed," Jesus Christ. ("Christ" means "Messiah" or "one who has been anointed for a special purpose.")
- We must be willing to **trust** Jesus to do what he has promised to do... the same way Abraham had to trust God.
- This means:

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⇒ People must have the same type of *faith* that Abraham had, in order to be considered his sons. (This applies to both Jews and Gentiles.)

So also, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, **that those who have faith are sons of Abraham.**

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and foretold the gospel to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So **those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**

Galatians 3:6-9 (BSB)

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may rest on grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring [whether Jew or Gentile (v. 16b)]. **He is the father of us all.** As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is **our father in the presence of God, in whom he believed,** ...

Romans 4:16a, 17a (BSB)

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↻ Blessings through the OFFSPRING of the 3 patriarchs?

"And **through your offspring** all nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Genesis 22:18 (BSB)

- **The above statement ultimately points to Christ**, who made salvation possible *even for Gentiles*. The New Testament points this out several times.
- *But this New Testament truth isn't based merely on the Abrahamic Covenant.* (By itself, we would probably be left unsure about any connection.) This statement was just one of *many* statements given by God, down through the centuries, which help us identify the Messiah (= Jesus).
- **What the New Testament says about this matter is just the "logical conclusion" of accepting the *entire Old Testament message!***

19

What the New Testament says about this matter is just the logical conclusion of accepting the *entire Old Testament message!*

And beginning with **Moses and all the Prophets**, [Jesus] explained to them what was written in all the Scriptures about Himself.

Luke 24:27 (BSB)

... the righteousness of God has been revealed, **as attested by the Law and the Prophets**. And this righteousness from God comes through **faith** in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Romans 3:21b-22a (BSB)

"But I [Paul] have had God's help to this day, and I stand here to testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond **what the prophets and Moses said would happen:**

that the Christ would suffer, and as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles."

Acts 26:22b-23 (BSB)

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Our MISSION:

God offers us blessings – now and in the future – whether we are Jew or Gentile.

These blessings are linked to Abraham and his offspring – especially his ultimate offspring, Jesus.

REJOICE in what God has done, and **SHARE** with others the opportunity to rejoice!

Be a follower of God (and therefore, an offspring of Abraham), and, with the rest of God's people, **be a blessing to others!**

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What about blessings from modern Israel?

INDIVIDUALS AND/OR NATION

Jews have made many contributions (good and bad) in many areas of life – far more than we would expect, when considering their small numbers in the world (only 0.2% of the world's population). It seems that some aspects of this covenant *are* being fulfilled, even today (though not all of their contributions can qualify as "blessings").

But don't forget this: Modern Israel (as a nation) is not following God!

Our loyalty is to God (not unsaved Israel)!

If individual Jews, or the nation of Israel, does good, we must endorse and encourage the good – and rejoice in the blessings it brings.

If they do evil, we must first verify that it *is* evil (and not the slander, half-truth and lies of Israel's enemies). Then, if it's confirmed to be evil, we must oppose it.

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SCRIPTURE

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