

END-TIMES ISSUES

#27 Abrahamic covenant – blessings and offspring.

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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.)

[TODAY] (Continued from last week.)

THIS ISSUE HAS A CONNECTION TO ALL OF THE OTHER ISSUES, BECAUSE IT INCLUDES WHAT JESUS WOULD ACCOMPLISH.

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)

If we are "Abraham's seed" (offspring), what are we supposed to do?

On this issue, Scripture has two main focuses:

- **Physical seed** (offspring/descendants)– the emphasis being on Israel, the *promised seed*, including both saved and unsaved Jews.
- **Spiritual seed** (offspring/descendants)– the emphasis being on those who trust God, like Abraham did. This includes *saved* Jews, as well as any Gentiles who trust God/Jesus.
- [Also: Isaac/Jacob; and Jesus, the ultimate source of blessings.]

The initial context of Abraham's situation.

- We need to *learn* from his example; so we will start with the *context* of Abraham's blessings: He trusted God and obeyed him.

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."

Genesis 12:1 (BSB)

What was Abraham supposed to do?

- He trusted God and obeyed him. What God said next was based on that trust and obedience.

- ✓ God would make him an example of what it meant to *be blessed*, and to *be a blessing* (the result of God blessing him).
- ✓ God would treat others based on the way they treated Abraham.
- ✓ Abraham would be the source of blessing for all other "families" (clans or nations). [Later, this promise is applied to his offspring.]

"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 **bless**ed through you."

Genesis 12:2-3 (BSB)

"And through your offspring all nations of the earth will be **bless**ed ..."

Genesis 22:18a (BSB)

What's missing? Abraham is going to *be* a blessing; but he is not told, "Go out and bless others!" Yet at the same time, people *will be* blessed because of Abraham's actions!

GOD will bless Abraham...

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will **bless** you;

ABRAHAM becomes a blessing.*

I will make your name great, so that you will be a **blessing**.

GOD will bless people ...

I will **bless** those who **bless** you and **curse** those who **curse** you;

PEOPLE blessed through Abraham (and his offspring, Genesis 22:18a).

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

Genesis 12:2-3 (BSB)

* (The O.T. Hebrew verb used here is an imperative, but the way it is used indicates that it is the result of what *God* is doing. It is not a *command* for Abraham to bless others; but it tells us that Abraham will become an *example* of what it means to be blessed.)

What about Abraham's immediate offspring (Isaac and Jacob)?

- **Isaac** and **Jacob** were told something similar to what Abraham was told: that all nations would be blessed through their *offspring*.
- In **Jacob's** case, the nations would also be blessed through *him*.

What about Abraham's ultimate offspring (Jesus)?

- **Jesus** is the one through whom all nations would be blessed. In fact, he is the one who makes blessings possible! (Without his death and resurrection, the only thing we could experience would be God's curse.)

"And through your offspring all nations of the earth will be **bless**ed ..."

Genesis 22:18a (BSB)

These two are *not* our focus today.

What about Israel – Abraham's physical offspring?

- The nation of **Israel**... they would be a blessing, and the end result would be many peoples and nations turning 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)

⇒ **Is Israel supposed to bless other nations?**

- There appears to be a connection between the blessings of Abraham's *physical* offspring and what happens to other nations. But it doesn't appear to be in the form of a *command*.
- The Bible does *not* have a strong emphasis on this topic.

What about us who are saved – Abraham's spiritual offspring?
(This is a New Testament focus, though it doesn't *exclude* people from the Old Testament era.)

There are passages that tell us we must bless others.

- We find these two commands (given by Jesus and Paul):

But to those of you who will listen, I say: ... **bless** those who **curse** you, ...

Luke 6:27a, 28a (BSB)

Bless those who **persecute** you. **Bless** and do not **curse**.

Romans 12:14 (BSB)

When we are **curse**d, we **bless**; ...

1 Corinthians 4:12b (BSB)

ARE YOU ONE "WHO WILL LISTEN"? IF SO, THEN JESUS SAID THIS TO YOU!

- Paul gives us an example to follow:

- Peter tells us *why* we should respond this way: so that we may receive the inheritance that God has called us to.

Do not repay **evil** with **evil** or **insult** with **insult**, but with **blessing**, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a **blessing**.

1 Peter 3:9 (BSB)

- James points out the *incompatibility* of blessing (praising) God and cursing people.

With the tongue we **bless** our Lord and Father, and with it we **curse** men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come **blessing** and **cursing**. My brothers, this should not be!

James 3:9-10 (BSB); see illustration from nature, vs. 11-12.

⇒ **All of the "blessing" verses we have seen refer to blessings that come from God.**

- We are to desire that our enemies receive this good *from God* – just like the good we desire for *ourselves*!

SUMMARY: Obligations to bless others...

- Abraham and blessings:** It's not so much a command, as it is a statement that "it's going to happen."
- Abraham's physical offspring – Israel – and blessings:** The concept of "bless/blessing" is quite common in the O.T., but we *don't* find passages that *command* Israel to bless. Still, there is a prophetic statement about blessings that will occur in the future, and will affect other nations.
- Abraham's spiritual offspring – saved individuals – and blessings:** We find passages that *command* us to bless others (often people who are doing evil to us), and passages that teach us about doing so.

⇒ **Why the differences between these various offspring?**
Understanding the words that are translated as "blessing" will help us to understand the different emphases.

Each testament has two word groups (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) that are translated as "blessing, blessed, etc." But only one of these word groups (in each testament) is used when referring to the Abrahamic Covenant blessings.

Two main types of blessings.

[GOD]


⇒ **THE "BLESSING" CONCEPT THAT IS CONNECTED TO THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT (AND SOMETIMES TO OTHER CONCEPTS):**

Old Testament: כָּרַךְ (bā-rāḱ) ≡ Strong's #H1288

- Basic concepts:** to kneel; to bless/be blessed; to praise; to greet (salute).
- In our relationship with God,** this concept works two ways: As we "kneel" before God in humility and worship, ☉ God *blesses* us with his favor, and ☉ we bless him with *praise*.
(The same Hebrew word is used for both actions; some translations use the word "bless" for both actions.)
- When directed toward people,** we are expressing a desire for God's favor to be upon them.

New Testament: εὐλογέω (eulogēō) ≡ Strong's #G2127

- Basic concepts:** to bless, to praise; to desire others to be blessed (by God); asking God to bless someone or something.



⇒ **THE "BLESSING" CONCEPT THAT IS NOT CONNECTED TO THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT:**

Old Testament: אָשַׁר (ā-šār) ≡ Strong's #833

- Basic concepts:** ☉ going straight ahead (generally implying an upright life), leading someone in the right direction (encouragement); ☉ being happy, blessed (often implied: blessed by God).


New Testament: μακάριος (makarios) ≡ Strong's #G3107

- Basic concepts:** being happy, blessed; having favorable circumstances.

These are the basic root words that represent each word group. For those interested in further research, the Strong's Concordance numbers for these words have included.

⇒ **BOTH TYPES OF "BLESSING" ARE IMPORTANT, BUT IN DIFFERENT WAYS.** (In certain situations, there is probably some overlap in word usage.)

- ★ One type has a greater focus on a person's relationship with God.
 - We must desire (and pray) that others will have this type of blessing. (This is also the reason for sharing the Good News with them.) We wish God's favor (including salvation) upon them, even if they desire to harm us.
- ★ One type has a greater focus on going through life in a blessed condition.
 - In Scripture, this focus will generally be long-term, rather than short-term.
 - This may be influenced by: God, what other people do, circumstances, our own choices.




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What is the significance of the "God-people" type of blessing, as it relates to the Abrahamic Covenant?

⇒ **IT CAN'T OCCUR WITHOUT GOD!**
People are not the cause of this type of blessing.

ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR ABRAHAM:

- Because Abraham trusted God, God *blessed* him with his favor (now and eternally).
 - ✓ These blessings were *guaranteed*; but some of them were not experienced in this present world. (See Hebrews 11:9-10, 13-16.)
- Abraham became a visible *example* of what it meant to be *blessed by God*.
- God promised to bless other people through Abraham and his offspring (and ultimately, through Jesus Christ).



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ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR ABRAHAM'S PHYSICAL OFFSPRING:

- **Repentance was needed.** Israel could experience this type of blessing *only to the extent that they were loyal to the God of Israel*. Otherwise, they had to experience the judgment (curses) of God.
- **There could be a time delay** between:
 - ✓ Their repentance and the experience of blessing (as God tests their loyalty).
 - ✓ Their rebellion and the loss of blessing (as God gives them opportunity to repent).
- **These blessings would affect Israel as a group.** Those who *didn't* repent might experience blessings that came after *others* had repented. But their experience of these blessings would end at death. [In the *opposite* situation: When the nation had to be judged because of sin, *saved individuals* within the *group* might have to suffer because of the *group's* sin. But this would end at death... then they would experience blessings for the rest of eternity.] →

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- **Being a blessing to the world.** Israel had this opportunity, but abandoned it. It would have been *God* doing the blessing; but *Israel's* loyalty to God would have influenced the other nations.

"Because I, the LORD, do not change, you descendants of Jacob have not been destroyed. Yet from the days of your fathers, you have turned away from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of Hosts. "Then **all the nations will call you blessed**, for you will be a land of delight," says the LORD of Hosts.

Malachi 3:6-7a, 12 (BSB)

- Someday, Israel *will* return to God, it *will* influence other nations!

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)

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ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL OFFSPRING:
(This includes saved people from all ages.)

- This type of blessing – including salvation – is from God, and *cannot exist without him*.
- **These blessings will last for eternity**, even though there may be times we don't seem to experience them in this present life.
- **It is our duty to desire God's blessings for others** – even for our enemies who desire our harm. Aware that this type of blessing comes only from God, we are to do whatever we can to encourage our enemies to *turn to God*. This includes us responding to their evil with good, and praying for them!

Love your enemies, **do good** to those who hate you, **bless** those who curse you, **pray** for those who mistreat you.

Luke 6:27b-28 (BSB)

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⇒ **The other type of blessing is also important!**

⇒ **WE WANT GOOD TO OCCUR IN THE WORLD!**
Though people and circumstances may influence this type of blessing, we still give God credit for all the good that occurs in life.

- As before, this type of blessing can be short-lived, or eternal. For it to be eternal, we need to start by having the right perspective about ourselves and God.
- This is the type of blessing that is mentioned in the "Sermon on the Mount." Here, the focus is on the influence that our attitude and actions have on *our own* blessings.

"**Blessed** are the poor in spirit ... those who mourn ... the meek ... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ... the merciful ... the pure in heart ... the peacemakers ... those who are persecuted because of righteousness..."

From Matthew 5:3-10 (BSB)



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⇒ THIS IS THE TYPE OF "BLESSING" THAT EVEN ATHEISTS CAN HAVE!

- Sometimes things just don't seem right. The wicked seem to prosper and the righteous suffer. We may find ourselves asking...

Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Why do all the faithless live at ease?
Jeremiah 12:1b (BSB)
- It is quite possible that they are experiencing this type of blessing – the type that can be influenced by people and circumstances. In fact, *if a person is willing to let the book of Proverbs influence how he lives, he will live a better life, than the person who goes against what it teaches!*
- However, no matter how well things may go in this present life, *all of it is temporary. In the end, they will lose it all.*

Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look for them, they will not be found.
Psalm 37:10 (BSB)

**What about curse – are they ever legitimate?
Sometimes ... depending on context.**

- This English word is used when translating *several* O.T. Hebrew and N.T. Greek words. So the specific words and their contexts will determine the answer.
- We are *not* referring to the expression of foul language, hatred and rage – the types of "cursing and swearing" that we may hear people uttering when things do not go their way. (These things are sin, but are condemned as separate items.)
- We are NOT to desire revenge or harm for those who harm us. Instead, we are to desire *God's* blessing on them (including their salvation), just like we desire God's blessing on ourselves.
- Judgment must come upon people who choose to do evil; but exercising this judgment is *God's* role (or, when applicable, the role of God's designated civil authorities – Romans 13).

- The word "curse" may be used to describe various *legitimate* actions.
 - ✓ God's righteous judgment against the wicked; the word is used to describe various punishments that sinful people deserve.
 - ✓ Prophetic statements (including warnings) against the wicked.
 - ✓ A description of those who reject God's Word, or who have chosen to do evil. They are described as "cursed."
 - ✓ Oaths or vows may require a curse (punishment) if the oath is broken.
- As far as our personal conduct is concerned – especially during times when injustice cannot be resolved – we are to desire that God's *blessing* would enter their lives.

Bless those who persecute you. **Bless** and do not **curse**.
Romans 12:14 (BSB)

- When evil seems to prevail, we are to leave the situation in God's hands, and *continue to do what is good*.
 - ❖ We desire for our enemies to repent and receive the blessings that come only from God. But even if they don't...
 - ❖ We can bless them with expressions of love that are a reflection of the love that *God* offers them.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. ... If it is possible on your part, live at peace with everyone.
Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord."
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
Romans 12:17a, 18-19, 21 (BSB)

OUR MISSION!

God offers to **bless** all who are willing to trust and obey him, following in the footsteps of Abraham, the man of faith.

**BLESSING
TYPE 1**

(The type that God alone can give.)
Pursue the type of blessing that only God can give. Then encourage others to do so as well.

**BLESSING
TYPE 2**

(The type that we can have influence over.)
Choose a way of life that has a positive influence – blessing both yourself and those around you.

Credits

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