

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

(**Bold** type and underlining in scripture text have been added for emphasis)
(Your questions and comments are welcome)

Continuing from the premise that God revealed to the writers of the New Testament the ultimate meaning and application of the law and prophecies of the Old Testament, **we will now focus on the scripture's explanation concerning the seed of Abraham.**

We read in the book of Genesis that God made certain promises to Abraham:

Genesis 12

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee **a great nation**, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall **all families** of the earth be blessed.

After Lot was separated from Abraham, the Lord said into Abraham:
Genesis 13

14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and **to thy seed** for ever.

16 And I will make **thy seed** as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall **thy seed** also be numbered.

We have seen in a previous consideration that Abraham had a son, Isaac, who also had a son whose name was Jacob. And further, that Jacob had twelve sons through whom came the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve tribes grew into a great nation that eventually inhabited the land that God had promised to Abraham. **We are told at:**

Joshua 21

43 And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and **they possessed it**, and dwelt therein.

44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; **all came to pass**.

Before the children of Israel possessed the land, we know that the Lord brought them out of Egypt where they had been bondmen for a period of 400 years. After the Lord delivered them out of Egypt, he led them through the

wilderness and brought them to Kadesh-Barnea. From there, twelve men were sent to spy out the land of Canaan. Those men returned and reported that it was a good land, but that there were giants in the land. Hearing the report that there were giants in the land, many of the people were afraid and murmured against the Lord. **The Lord said to Moses at:**

Numbers 14

28 Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

29 Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me.

30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32 But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness.

34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Joshua led those who survived the wilderness, into the land. During the children of Israel's occupation of the land, they experienced periods of rest and also periods of suffering at the hands of their enemies. However, because of their apostasy, the Lord eventually delivered them into captivity. He first allowed the Assyrians to take Israel (the northern ten tribes) captive, and finally Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon.

After seventy years in Babylon, a **remnant** returned to the land and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. But when **the old covenant was replaced by the new covenant** at the advent of Christ, Mount Zion and Jerusalem were under the domination of Rome, and the Jews were scattered throughout "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). The temple, rather than being "a house of prayer", had become "a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13).

This summary of Israel's history gives us a very brief survey of God's temporal and physical implementation of his promise to Abraham of a seed and of a land.

We have previously considered (see Considerations Related To Interpreting Scripture) how the transition from the Old Testament economy to that of the

New Testament resulted in significant and substantive changes in the “priesthood”, the “house”, the “sacrifice”, “Jerusalem”, the “nation”, the “land”, and “circumcision”. **Now we will focus on the explanation by the New Testament writers of the spiritual and eternal aspects of God’s implementation of his promise to Abraham of a seed.**

The apostle Paul, in explaining to the churches of Galatia the change from the old covenant administration to that of the new covenant, wrote them concerning the promises to Abraham:

Galatians 3

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to **thy seed**, which is **Christ**.

17 And this I say, **that the covenant**, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, **the law**, which was four hundred and thirty years after, **cannot disannul**, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till **the seed should come to whom the promise was made**; ***.

Here is clear testimony that God’s promise was to Abraham and to **Christ**, Abraham’s seed. “**And to thy seed**”, in verse 16 above, refers to, “**and to thy seed**” at Genesis 13:15 hereinbefore cited. (see also, Genesis 17:7 where the promise is expressed “**and to thy seed**”).

In an earlier consideration of the “nation”, we saw that the house of Israel was a “testimony of those things which were to be spoken after” (Hebrews 3:5). Also, that the physical nation of Israel was the temporal people of God, and they were the possessors of a physical and temporal inheritance on the earth.

And further, that the “forever” aspect of God’s promise to Abraham of a great nation and of a land would be realized in a people, inclusive of Jew and Gentile, who are by grace through faith related to God in the Person of Christ. So, while **Christ** is the “seed to whom the promise was made”, there is a seed, in the collective sense who, through faith, share in the promises to Abraham and Christ. This collective seed is referred to as **Christ’s brethren** at: **Hebrews 2**

11 For both **he that sanctifieth** and **they who are sanctified** are all of **one**: for which cause he is not ashamed **to call them brethren**,

12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee

The apostle Paul continues in his explanation of Abraham’s seed, in this collective sense, by saying at: **Galatians 3**

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them **that believe**.

26 **For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 **There is neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: **for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.**

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Thus, *the spiritual and eternal implementation of God's promise to Abraham did not inure to any people on the basis of natural posterity. But rather, the beneficial effects of the promise rests solely with individuals who, by faith, are Christ's, who is Abraham's seed to whom the promise was made, and who is the "firstborn of many brethren"* as stated at:

Romans 8

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among **many brethren**.

When John the Baptist was preaching in preparation for the appearing of Christ, he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism: Matthew 3

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And **think not** to say within yourselves, **We have Abraham to our father**: for I say unto you, that God is able **of these stones** to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Clearly, John the Baptist was aware that there were those who claimed a *scripturally unwarranted relationship to God*, apart from Christ, *based on being the natural posterity of Abraham*. It should be noted that John denounced this relationship in no uncertain terms. That connection had the nominal value of "these stones".

Paul, in comparing the old covenant administration to that of the new covenant, says at: **2 Corinthians 3**

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of **the new testament**; not of the letter, but of the **spirit**: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

The apostle Paul is explaining that, while the giving of the law was glorious, the glory of the law **written in our hearts and minds by the indwelling Spirit** greatly exceeds that first glory that was to come to an end. When Moses descended the mount, his face shown with such brightness from being in the presence of God that he put a vail over his face that obscured that glory, so that the children of Israel could not see beyond the covenant that was **to be abolished**. However, when Christ went to the cross, the veil that was between man and Gods glory was removed so that, in Christ, each person can come into **the presence of God** and His glory. **This is the glory of the new covenant**. But, even today, when the Old Testament is read, that veil is upon their heart so that many in **Israel** cannot see that, in Christ, all has been fulfilled **to them**. The encouragement is in the fact that if a person **will turn to the Lord**, the veil will be removed and he or she can see that, **in the Lord Jesus, deliverance from sins penalty and power** is much more glorious than **Israel's deliverance from their physical enemies (other nations) in the land of Canaan**. Also, in the "Christian Community", there is a theological system of thinking in which, when the Old Testament is read, there is this same obscuration concerning God's having fulfilled His promises to Israel in and through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The collective expression of the beneficial effects of the promise to Abraham and his seed was also heralded by the prophets: Isaiah 49

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

14 **But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.**

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

17 Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

20 The children which thou shalt have, **after** thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand **to the Gentiles**, and set up my standard **to the people**: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and **thou shalt know that I am the LORD**: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Isaiah 51

1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

3 **For the LORD shall comfort Zion**: he will comfort all her waste places; **and he will make her wilderness like Eden**, and her desert **like the garden of the LORD**; joy and gladness shall be found therein, **thanksgiving**, and **the voice of melody**.

While historically, Zion was a hill or mountain related in close proximity to Jerusalem, when we come to Christ, we are told at:

Hebrews 12

22 But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto **the city of the living God**, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and **church of the firstborn**, which are written in heaven, and to **God the Judge of all**, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to **Jesus the mediator of the new covenant**, and to **the blood of sprinkling**, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

During the old covenant administration, Zion and Jerusalem experienced desolation and bereavement of their children. Such was also the situation when Christ came to the earth. In the referenced passages, the prophet Isaiah is lamenting this condition of Zion, but also, holding forth hope for Zion's restoration and revival. This restoration is explained by the prophet Isaiah at chapter 49, and in verses 22 and 23: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to **the people*****and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed **that wait for me**".

The Isaiah passages quoted above are referring to that which is explained by the apostle Paul at:

Ephesians 3

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in **the mystery of Christ)**
5 Which **in other ages** was **not made known** unto the sons of men, **as it is now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
6 **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**
7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.
8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
9 And to make all men see what is **the fellowship** of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world **hath been hid in God**, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
10 To the intent that **now** unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known **by the church** the manifold wisdom of God,
11 **According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:**

Also, Ephesians 1

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times **he might gather together in one all things in Christ**, both **which are in heaven**, and **which are on earth**; even in him:

The dispensation of the fullness of times is in the present age as explained at: Galatians 4

4 But when **the fulness of the time** was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.
6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

In conclusion, we learn that what Zion and Jerusalem represent under the old covenant is realized in the Person and work of Christ, who is the “seed”, through Abraham, to whom God made promise. As we read in the prophecy of Isaiah, God lifted up his hand to the Gentiles and set up his standard to the people (referring to his people Israel).

God did this by sending his Son, as we read at:

Romans 3

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins **that are past**, through the **forbearance** of God;
26 To declare, I say, **at this time** his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.
27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.
28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
29 **Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:**
30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the **circumcision by faith**, and **uncircumcision through faith.**

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, **we establish the law.**

Thus, Christ's death inured to the benefit of all who believe from creation, past, to the completing of the kingdom, future. We are come to "Mount Zion and to the heavenly Jerusalem", and to the "church of the firstborn", and to "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant"-Heb. 12:22-24. In Christ, who is the seed to whom the promise was made, and who is the firstborn of many brethren, both, Jew and Gentile are through faith the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise.