

Abraham's Descendants Are Born Into A Covenant With God

'The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country and your relatives and go from your father's house to the land I will show you. I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you. In you will all of the families of the earth be blessed'" (Genesis 12:1 to 3). 'Behold, the word of the Lord came to Abraham saying, "He who will come forth out of your own body will be your heir." God brought Abraham outside and said, "Look toward the sky and count the stars if you are able to count them. So will your descendants be." Abraham believed in God and He credited it to him for righteousness. God said to Abraham, "I am the Lord Who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to inherit." ... On that day God made a covenant with Abraham saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the Nile River of Egypt to the River Euphrates" (Genesis 15:4 to 7, 18). Abraham was ninety-nine years old when God changed his name from Abram (high father) to Abraham (father of a multitude) (Genesis 17:1 & 5).

The Land of Israel and beyond was from that day onwards, the land of Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob, and it still is. Israel is yet to inhabit some of the land that was promised to them but one day, Israel will be a vast country, much larger than it is today according to this initial promise from the mouth of the Lord. The two main international faiths, Judaism and Christianity come from the same source, which is the covenant God made with Abraham. There are many similarities between Judaism and Christianity but there are many differences too. Jewish people are the bloodline descendants of Abraham but Christians are adopted by faith to be Abraham's children (Galatians 3:7). One main similarity between Judaism and Christianity is the fact we love and worship the one true Creator God and will have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). We both love to read the Bible, the one true Word of God written down by ancient prophets as God told them what to write and record for future generations (Exodus 17:14; 34:27). We love to sing His praises and spend time in prayer, connecting to the Lord of the universe and King of Israel (Psalm 149:2).

There are differences between the lives of Jewish people and Gentile believers. Persecution of Christians does occur in some countries but most Western Christians have little or no personal experience of deep persecution compared to what the Jewish people have been forced to endure for centuries. They have suffered persecution, discrimination, oppression, intimidation, they have had children taken from them, they have been tortured and murdered just because they were born Jewish and we know anti-Semitism is on the rise around the world. Christians do have more freedom to practice their faith as they choose. Christians do not have to adhere to specific prayer schedules, we do not have several rules to follow, we do not have specific Bible verses or a reading schedule, we can take our holidays whenever we choose and not on certain dates, we can eat whatever we want, when we want. Jewish people are born into Abraham's covenant and their faith in God. They are taught from infancy to love and obey the Lord. Christians are not born into faith, we have to personally accept God when we become old enough to understand we are sinners and need to be saved. When Jesus came, He partly freed humanity from the strict laws of Judaism.

Some Christians feel Orthodox Jewish people are under a heavy burden of law-keeping but in reality, they are not. Jewish people are born into their faith so every Jewish child is born with an unbreakable connection to their Hebrew history dating back to creation and following the lineage from Adam to Abraham, Moses and the Children of Israel, the kings, the exiles, the Temples the great scattering of Jewish people and finally the return of the Jewish people to their rightful homeland. This is their story, written in the Bible and completely backed up by archaeology, ancient texts, excavations and artefacts. The Jewish people can prove their history, which is something no other race of people can in the same way to the same extent. Abraham obeyed the voice of God, travelled to a country he did not know, received amazing promises of an abundance of descendants and a Promised Land. God never ever promised anything like this to anyone else from any other nation. Abraham was a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13). The promises from the Lord gave Abraham and his entire family a unique future and a destiny no other person ever received. The story of the Hebrews is a story of love, obedience and a covenant that includes every genuine Bible believer. Abraham was said to be a friend of Lord Yahweh. 'Our God drove out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and He gave it to the descendants of Abraham your friend forever' (2 Chronicles 20:7). 'You Israel My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend' (Isaiah 41:8). 'The Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness." He was called the friend of God' (James 2:23).

Through prosperity and peace, trials and tribulations over thousands of years, Abraham's descendants have continued their journey, all written down and recorded, initially on ancient scrolls and parchment and later in the Bible. From the Ur of the Chaldees, to Haran in Mesopotamia, to Canaan, to Egypt and back to settle in family tribes in the country that is now Israel, we can easily follow their journeys. The Hebrews were chosen by God to create a nation and build a society unlike anything the world had ever seen before. The entire ancient world worshipped idols. False gods were everywhere; gods of the sky, gods of the earth, gods of the

sea, gods of the land, gods of cities, the country, the mountains, valleys, male and female gods, families of gods and gods of animals, birds and wildlife. The Lord, Creator God, the only true God wanted to change that. The Lord began to build a nation to counter the world-wide idolatry. The Hebrew civilisation was built on truth and the laws given by God to the Children of Israel as a guidebook, initially for them and later for the entire world to follow, all the while honouring the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and building a culture around the relationship between God and mankind. Through the Bible we know mankind was created in the living image of God, we know God is in control of all weather patterns, we know mankind has only been on earth for about six or seven thousand years, we know there is water on other planets and out in the atmosphere and all kinds of scientific facts that are written in the Bible and only recently discovered by scientists. The Jewish people have transformed the entire unbelieving world, from having hundreds of pagan idolatrous nations, spiritually lost and without hope or knowledge of God, to a world where God is known in every corner of the globe and anyone, anywhere can accept His salvation whenever they choose. Salvation was God's idea and comes only from the Jewish people (John 4:22) through the blood and cross of Jesus, our Jewish Saviour. This all began with an eternal covenant between God and Abraham.

The opening verses containing the covenant, reveals the plans God has for His people. God promised to bless all of Abraham's descendents and cause them to bless all of mankind and then God will bless anyone who blesses the Jewish people, almost like a triangle of blessing. When Abraham accepted God at His word, that faith and trust was credited to Abraham as righteousness. Those promises are sealed with the covenant, which was sealed by sacrificing animals and birds. 'God said to Abraham, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove and a young pigeon." Abraham brought God all of these and divided them down the middle then laid each half opposite the other but he did not divide the birds ... When the sun went down and it was twilight, behold a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day God made a covenant with Abraham' (Genesis 15:9, 10, 17 & 18). After sunset, God Himself in the form of heat, fire, smoke and light passed alone between the pieces and thus sealed the holy covenant between Himself and Abraham. It is possible the smoke and flame were symbolic or an analogy of the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire that would accompany Abraham's descendents, Moses and the Children of Israel through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21).

Abraham was a faithful, obedient man who was the first to pay tithes and the first to ever take the symbolic body and blood of Jesus in the form of bread and wine shared with Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18 to 20). He stood with God face to face and had a conversation about Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:22 to 33). Abraham's faithfulness was more than just obedient action, he responded to God with complete trust. His trust released him to be able to take Sarah, with his family, their servants and all their possessions on a journey when they had no idea where they would end up. 'Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, all the possessions they had gathered and the souls (servants) whom they had employed in Haran and they went forth to the land of Canaan' (Genesis 12:4 & 5).

The valid covenant between God and Abraham gives Jewish people their unique sense of identity. Being the chosen children of a highly Spiritual covenant with Almighty God is not something any other nation can claim. It is a fact that can never be changed. It is who the Jewish people are and there can never be a question of God's love for his people, bound by the covenant God Himself initiated. The covenant and the promises that accompany it was God's idea and sixteen times it is written, "God remembered His covenant." This was God reaching out to humanity and establishing a unique race of people for the purpose of eventually sending Jesus to save the souls of the spiritually lost, but the nation had to be established and ready first. This covenant is vitally important for our place in the Kingdom of God. Jewish people are God's covenant people. Gentiles are God's adopted people, grafted into the Spiritual olive tree (olive oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit) by faith and by the grace of God. We are the new creation, created by God for Himself and we will have our place in the Kingdom of God along with all people who have accepted the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Many people will resent the following statement but it is very true. The only people who can be welcomed into heaven will be ancient Hebrew people, ancient Gentiles who chose to walk with God, ancient and modern Jewish people and born-again Christian people. The only way anybody can get into heaven is through the blood sacrifice of Jesus and by obeying God's commands. Jesus said He is the only Way and nobody can get to the Father unless they accept God's way of salvation (John 14:6) by the dramatic and extreme death of Jesus on the cross.

If anybody is involved with a religion that does not have Jesus at its head, Scripturally, that person is eternally lost. Jesus is the only way our soul can make it into heaven after we die. Gentiles had once been complete strangers to the covenant of promise but Jesus came and changed that, making salvation possible for Gentiles too. 'You (Gentiles) were once separate from Jesus, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world, but now in Jesus, you who once were far off are made near in the blood of Jesus' (Ephesians 2:12 & 13). This Abrahamic covenant relationship is hardly taught in churches today even though it is vitally important for our

salvation. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we also enter into the same covenant Abraham had and that is why we can be called the children of Abraham and Sarah. This link in the Spiritual chain will continue to hold us in Abraham's covenant for eternity, as long as we continue to walk with God. We need to be like Abraham, take God at His word, believe in Him, trust in Him, be faithful to Him and only then can we find our identity in Him and we can truthfully say, "I am a child of Abraham by adoption." 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God. You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by Whom we cry out (with joy), "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our (human) spirit, we are children of God' (Romans 8:14 to 16).

Amen and God bless you.

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