

## I Believe in the Faithfulness of God

Barry O'Dell

**T**he Bible repeatedly refers to God as “faithful.” He is “*the faithful God, which keepeth covenant*” (Deut. 7:9). Isaiah wrote that the Lord “*is faithful*” (Isa. 49:7). Paul wrote that “*God is faithful*” in several of his letters (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 1 Thes. 5:24; 2 Thes. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13). The writer of Hebrews told his recipients that God is faithful (Heb. 10:23). John tells us that God is faithful (1 Jn. 1:9). In this edition of FCGN, the focus will be on the promises made to Abraham as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 which reads, “*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: 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: 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.*” The faithfulness of God was displayed as He kept each of the three promises given in the above text.

Abram was promised by God that “*I will make of thee a great nation.*” This promise is especially interesting because we are told in the previous chapter that Sarai was barren and had no child (Gen. 11:30). That being the case, how would it come to pass that Abram would become a great nation? Not only was she barren, but Abram was 75 years old when these promises were made (Gen. 12:4)! As we progress through the Biblical text, we find a question that Abram asked God: “*Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless...Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed*” (Gen. 15:2-3). God then promised, “*And He brought him forth abroad, and said, 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*” (Gen. 15:5).

Ten years passed (Gen. 16:3)! Abram is now 85 and has no son! What of the promise of God that Abram would be a “*great nation?*” As man is often prone, Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands and a son was born by Abram to Hagar, Sarai’s servant (Gen. 16:1-4). Had God failed to keep His promise to Abram? Ten years is a long time! Yet, 14 more years would pass and Abram and Sarai are yet to have a son (Gen. 17:1). The promise was made when Abram was 75 and now he is 99! What about the faithfulness of God? It is in Genesis 17:5 that the “*exalted father*” (Abram) is renamed “*a father of a*

*multitude*” (Abraham). The Lord reiterated the promise of a child and then told Abraham to name him Isaac, who would become a great nation (Gen. 17:19-21). It should be noted that God, in this text, stated that these things would happen “*at this set time in the next year*” (Gen. 17:21). That thought is repeated in Genesis 18:10. Then, in Genesis 21:2 we read, “*For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.*”

The promise of a great nation was extended to Isaac as recorded in Genesis 26:4. Genesis 25:12-28 records the birth of twins to Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Esau. God told her that “*two nations*” were in her womb. The Bible student knows that from Jacob came Israel and from Esau came Edom (Gen. 36:1). It is from the lineage of Jacob (Israel) that God ultimately worked to bring the Promised Seed, Jesus, into the world (Gal. 3:16). The faithfulness of God is seen in the fulfillment of these promises. Jumping ahead, Deuteronomy 10:22 reads, “*Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three-score and ten persons (seventy); and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.*” Those were the very words spoken to Abram many years prior (Gen. 15:5).

Exodus 1 reveals the extent to which Israel had grown after they had entered Egypt and became slaves under a Pharaoh who “*knew not Joseph*” (Ex. 1:8). By that time, we are told, “*And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them*” (Ex. 1:7). God is faithful! As members of the body of Christ today we are heirs of the promises that were made to Abraham thousands of years ago. Those who have been baptized into Christ are, “*...Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (Gal. 3:26-29). As we labor in the world for the Lord, we can rest assured that God is faithful to His own. He knows those who are His (2 Tim. 2:19). Our labor in the Lord will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Hebrews 6:10 reads, “*For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*” God is faithful! It is of interest that also in Hebrews 6 the author discussed the “*promise to Abraham*” (Heb. 6:13). The God that Abraham served is the God that we serve today. God is faithful!

“...we can rest assured that God is faithful to His own.”

The conscientious Bible student should be concerned about the Seed promise made by Jehovah to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). For it contains a promise of a Descendant who would “*bless all of the families of the earth*” (Gen. 12:3). This Seed promise was fulfilled in the primary sense upon the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21:1-7). However, in the ultimate sense its fulfillment was occasioned by the birth of Jesus the Christ, the spiritual child of promise (Acts 3:25, 26; Gal. 3:16). The intended spiritual design of the Abrahamic Covenant, which contains the Seed promise, is recorded in Galatians 3:5-29. This passage of Scripture reveals three great designs of the covenant that Jehovah made with Abraham. These include: (1) The blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant are promised to those who live by an obedient faith in Jesus the Messiah (8-14); (2) The blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant are confirmed in the person of the Messianic Seed, Jesus (15-22); and, (3) The blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant are bestowed upon the spiritual heirs of Abraham, which are those who have obeyed the Gospel of Jesus the Christ (23-29). Let’s consider why this writer believes whole-heartedly in the Abrahamic Seed Promise.

First, we learn that Jehovah was and is still interested in having a relationship with mankind. Jehovah has gone through great lengths to redeem humanity. This becomes abundantly clear when one scrutinizes the pronouncement (Gen. 3:15), the initial promise (Gen. 12:1-3), and the fulfillment (Gal. 3:16) of the Seed Promise. Jesus, in being the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Seed Promise, was according to the Divine plan that God designed “*before the foundation of the world*” (Eph. 1:4, 5). The fact that God, the Word, would come to earth in human form (Jn. 1:1-14), speaks volumes to the special interest that God had for those who were made “*in His image*.” The promise of redemption through the “*seed of woman*” (Gen. 3:15) would narrow to the seed of Abraham, which later would be narrowed through the seed of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and the seed of David (2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Matt. 1:1), and the apostle Paul explains in depth that the fulfillment of this was Jesus the Christ (Gal. 3:16). Therefore, the salvation that Jehovah has and still offers the world through His Son (the Seed), is not an accident. Contrary to popular belief, Jesus fulfilled the salvation portion of the promise that God made to Abraham. Thus, there is no more distinction between Jew and Gentile, and we need not offer any more special treatment to fleshly/physical “*Jews/Israel*” as a godly race. The Premillennialist teaches that Jesus will return to this earth before He commences a one thousand-year reign on David’s throne in Jerusalem. The premillennial doctrine advertises the false notion that God intends to reestablish a Jewish kingdom in Palestine. The doctrine contends that there is yet a purpose to be served by fleshly Israel. This doctrine is dangerous for many reasons. Ultimately, it offers a false hope to physical Jews. The physical nation of Israel was selected to pave

the way for the Promised Seed, Jesus (Gal. 3:24, 25; Heb. 9:1-10). They grossly violated the Law of Moses. It was a constant struggle to get the physical Jews to maintain the expected level of faithfulness to God. Because of the rebellion of the nation, consummated by the murder of Jesus the Christ, God rejected the Jewish people. Moreover, God punished the physical nation in AD 70. Today, there is not a single Jew who knows his tribal ancestry. The physical nation of Israel is dead. Jehovah replaced physical Israel with a new nation, spiritual Israel. Thus, today, the “*Jew*” is not one who is so physically, but one who is so spiritually (Rom. 2:28, 29). In this age, those who submit to the Gospel of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 1:16), become children of God, and the true “*seed of Abraham*” (Gal. 3:26-29). Many religious people need to understand this today. I believe in the Abrahamic Seed promise because the evidence points to the fact, that God has always been especially interested in humanity!

Secondly, we learn from this great promise that we can rely upon the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises to man. The only way to trust God is to believe that God will do what He said He would do. Our trust system is based on compelling evidences. God has never expected anyone to blindly come to Him. Matter of fact, the gathering of evidence is a process involved in almost every endeavor of human activity. It is a part of the way the human mind was designed to operate. The word “*evidence*” derives from a Latin word, which signifies “*that which is clear, evident.*” Evidence and belief complement one another. Evidence prepares the way of belief. God has provided the necessary evidence for one to put their faith in Him. In Joshua 21:43-45, we see the emphasis of God giving the land to the nation of Israel and the blessings associated with them receiving the land. Thus, the faithfulness of God was demonstrated to God’s nation of old. His delay in answering the promise did not mean that He was unfaithful. The Seed promise sets forth the plan of redemption. This involves God’s providence and His faithfulness—His love, care, concern, protection, and His provision. Christ as “*the Seed*” and Redeemer of man is the apex and culmination of God’s word in making the plan of redemption a reality. The faithfulness of God is seen mightily in the birth, life and ministry of Christ (Gal. 4:4, 5).

The work of Christ fulfills the promise God made to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth. John gives clear evidence of His success (Rev. 5:9). Spiritual Israel, the church/kingdom, is blessed with God’s special providence while upon earth until we are taken to heaven (1 Cor. 15:24). As she is faithful to Christ, her head, she enjoys God’s presence (Eph. 2:21, 22). She is never forsaken by the Lord (Heb. 13:5). The Bible clearly shows God has providentially worked to make the plan of redemption a blessing by culminating the promises made to Abraham with the Redeemer and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

If an individual told you to leave the country in which you live, to leave your kinfolks and to leave your father's house and the individual would show you the land in which you were to move to, would you go? The answer we all would give is, "No!" because we don't know who this individual is that is telling us to leave, and we do not put our faith in man. For Abram though, he put his faith in God. He was a friend of God, and he trusted in God's promise to him and to his seed to receive the inheritance of the land.

**Terah Moves to Haran.** Abram and his family are living in Ur of the Chaldees at the time and his father Terah is planning to move to Haran which is about 600 miles northwest from Ur and about 400 miles northeast from Canaan. *"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran"* (Gen. 11:31-32). Haran was the first stopping

place for Abram and his family after leaving Ur. Abram was in search of the land which God would show him, a land that would be free from idolatry.

Abram had no idea where he was going, but he trusted God's plan. The Hebrews writer explained to us that, *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 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: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, who builder and maker is God"* (Heb. 11:8-10).

**Abram's Call.** God sets forth a threefold promise to Abram. *"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: 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: 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"* (Gen. 12:1-3). This could be considered as the hub of the Old Testament, just as the Book of Acts is considered the hub of the New Testament. In these three verses, we have the land promise, seed promise, and the nation promise. Any Bible student can read of these promises over and over throughout the Bible. For Abram to

receive these promises, he must first find the land which God will show him. You can't be a nation unless you have land to build upon and for your seed to inherit it. God first called Abram in Ur (Acts 7:2-4; Gen. 11:31). Second, Abram was called in Haran (Gen. 12:1-4). Third, Abram in Shechem (Gen. 12:7). Fourth, Abram in Bethel (Gen. 13:14-17). Fifth, Abram in Hebron (Gen. 15:5,18; 17:1-8). The same promise was given to Isaac (Gen. 26:3,4) and to Jacob (Gen. 28:13,14; 35:11,12; 46:3,4).

**Abram Enters the Land of Canaan.** Abram departed from Haran to look for a more sparsely settled land. When Abram left Haran he was 75 years old. Abram left Haran with his wife Sarai, Lot, his brother's son, along with all their belongings and others which they had gotten in Haran, and they started their journey to the land of Canaan. It's as if you can hear Abram saying, "to Canaan's land I'm on my way" (Gen. 12:4-5). As they started their journey to the land which God had promised Abram, they came to the place of Sichem (Shechem), unto the plain of Moreh. To Abram's surprise, he found that the Canaanite's were already living in the land (Gen. 12:6).

*"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He sware to give..."*

*"And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an alter unto the LORD, who appeared unto him"* (Gen. 12:7).

Abram continued on to the place called Bethel and he pitched his tent on the mountain, with Bethel on the west and Hai on the east, and built another alter unto the Lord (Gen. 12:8). Bethel comes into play later on through Jacob (Gen. 28:19). Abram continued and he went south, exploring the land. There was a famine that was grievous, so he continued on into Egypt to sojourn there. Abram should have depended on God during the famine, but he tried to do it his way and it caused a lot of issues for Abram and his wife Sarai when they were in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20). Abram and Sarai left out from Egypt, and returned to Bethel where he originally began between Bethel and Hai, and Abram called on the name of the LORD (Gen. 13:1-4). Abram and Lot are separated, and the LORD told Abram to look to the north, south, east, and west. *"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever"* (Gen. 13:14-18). We know that Moses called this great inheritance a land that flows with milk and honey (Exo. 3:8; Lev. 20:24; Deut. 6:3, 26:9,15). God gave them all the land and it would be fulfilled when Joshua led the children of Israel across the Jordan river to possess the land. *"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein"* (Jos. 21:43-45).

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### The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus the Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47)

#### Salvation

- Saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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