

(Gen. 12:1) - Abraham is an important figure both in the Old and New Testaments. He is a prime example of how God justifies sinners in salvation by God's free and sovereign grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received in Him by God-given faith (*John 8:31-45*). Many of the Jews claimed to be right with God based on their physical connection with Abraham. Christ showed them that this meant nothing in the matter of being justified before God. He showed them how Abraham believed in and looked forward to Him for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and life (*John 8:46-59*). The Apostle Paul wrote of this same Gospel truth in explaining how God justified both Abraham and David, two historical figures of whom the Jews thought very highly (*Rom. 4:1-8*).

Abraham was a sinner saved by God's grace and a prime example of God justifying the ungodly based solely on the righteousness of Christ imputed to him (*Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:9-25*). He was born as a sinner fallen in Adam and spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. He began life as an idolater (*Joshua 24:2*), but God had chosen him and given him to Christ before the world began. Abraham's calling from God to leave his home was by the sovereign power and grace of God. Abraham was brought by God to faith in Christ and true repentance. Abraham, like Noah, found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

(Gen. 12:2) - God made a covenant with Abraham to make of him "a great nation," to bless him, make his name great, and make him a blessing to others. This is God's promise that Abraham would be the father of children, but Sarai, Abraham's wife, was barren (*Gen. 11:30*). So, it is clear that this promise could not be conditioned on Abraham. It had to be the work of God. This covenant is reflective of God's grace in the salvation of His people - His elect in Christ, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. This was a unilateral covenant (one-sided as to its final outcome), because it was not conditioned on or dependent upon Abraham at all. Like the everlasting covenant of grace which provides for the eternal salvation of sinners, it was (and is) all of the Lord's doing and conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. All the promises of the covenant of salvation are sure and certain in Christ (*2 Sam. 23:3-5; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 7:22*). Consider that whenever there is a bilateral covenant (two-sided as in God's covenant with Adam in the Garden and God's covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai), it is a total failure as far as saving man. It fails because whenever the blessings of God are conditioned on mutable and sinful people, they fail. Such bilateral covenants serve only to show our sinfulness and depravity as well as our need of God's grace in Christ and HIS righteousness to justify us (*Rom. 3:19-20; 5:20; Gal. 3:24*).

Later on, God promises Abraham that He would be "the father of many nations." God would make him "exceeding fruitful" and "kings" would come out of him (*Gen. 17:1-6*). Abraham is the father of many nations in a natural sense and in a spiritual sense. His natural descendants are Jews and Arabs. They are ABRAHAM'S PHYSICAL SEED (offspring). God made many promises to Abraham. Some of them are physical and temporal. Some of them pertain to all of Abraham's physical seed, including the Arab nations through Ishmael (*Gen. 21:13-19*). Most pertain to ABRAHAM'S SPECIAL, PHYSICAL SEED, the nation of Israel through Isaac (*Gen. 17:18-21*). It was through Abraham and Sarah, and specifically through the physical nation Israel, that God would provide for the sinless humanity of the seed of woman, the Lord Jesus Christ Who would accomplish the salvation of the spiritual seed of Abraham, both Jew and Gentile. So, the spiritual and eternal aspects of God's promises to Abraham would be accomplished by Christ and pertain to ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL SEED, which is all sinners saved by God's grace in and by Christ. Christ is identified as ABRAHAM'S UNIQUE SEED in *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." God's elect are identified as

ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL SEED in *Romans 9:6-8* and *Galatians 3:26-29* (cf. *Rom. 2:28-29; 4:11-12; Heb. 2:10-18*).

It would be in the land of Canaan (the land God promised to Abraham and His special, physical seed - *Gen. 15:7*), that Christ would fulfill and accomplish His glorious mission to redeem His people by His blood and establish righteousness by which God justifies the ungodly. As God in sinless human flesh, Christ suffered unto death to save all the spiritual seed of Abraham, both Jew and Gentile. Christ had to be Divine while at the same time human without sin. He must be God the Son incarnate. In the flesh He must be born of woman. So, the first and foremost purpose of this covenant was to make known the physical line from which the Messiah would come (*Matt. 1:1-2, 17, 21-23*). It was God's promise and purpose to give the natural descendants of Abraham (the Jews) the land of Canaan as an inheritance, and to keep them in that land, in spite of their sinfulness and rebellion, as an "everlasting possession" (*Gen. 17:8*), meaning that they would dwell in that land, not forever and forever, but until God fulfilled His purpose in bringing Christ into the world through them in that land.

(Gen. 12:3) - From the time of Abraham, as the Lord dealt with the nation Israel, He sovereignly, powerfully, and unconditionally preserved them and, eventually, brought them into the land of promise. Throughout their history, they had many enemies and few allies. To preserve them, God promised that He would bless all who blessed them and curse all who cursed them. God's protection and preservation of them as a nation was never due to their goodness, faithfulness, or obedience. Like all of us by nature, they were sinful, unfaithful, and disobedient. But God's purpose to use them as the human channel through whom Christ would come in the flesh could not fail. So, nations that blessed Israel were temporally and physically blessed by God. Nations that cursed Israel were cursed by God. But, as a whole, the nation of Israel was made up of sinful, unbelieving, rebellious, and idolatrous people who broke the covenant that God made with them through Moses on Mount Sinai (*Isa. 1:1-13; Jer. 31:31-32*).

The spiritual and eternal promises of God to Abraham were only accomplished and realized in the coming of Christ and the salvation of God's SPIRITUAL people out of "all families of the earth" (both Jew and Gentile) who are blessed with all SPIRITUAL blessings in Christ Jesus (*Eph. 1:3*). This is "the blessing of Abraham" that would come upon God's elect, both Jew and Gentile (*Gal. 3:7-14*). This is how "all families of the earth" are blessed through Abraham. This is SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, made up of sinners saved by grace and, like Abraham, brought to faith in Christ and true repentance of dead works and idolatry. This is the church of the living God. The promise of blessing to all who bless the true church is fulfilled in God bringing His elect, Jew and Gentile, into the spiritual family of Christ (*Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 3:8-11*). The promise of cursing all who curse (reject and persecute) the true church is fulfilled in the condemnation and eternal death of the wicked in the end (*Psa. 37:37-38; 73:1-20; Eccl. 8:12-13*).

(Gen. 12:4-8) - Abraham left his home because he believed the Lord, i.e. the promises that God had made concerning both physical and spiritual matters. Verse 7 and 8 tell us that he built "an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD." The Bible tells us, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (*Rom. 10:13*). This is an act of God-given faith and the result of God revealing Himself to His people in the Gospel of His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 10:14-17; cf. Acts 2:21; Rom. 1:16-17*). Abraham calling upon the name of the Lord was evidence that God had imputed Christ's righteousness to him (*Rom. 4:1-22*). When God brings any sinner to believe in Christ and call upon His name, it is evidence that God has imputed that same righteousness of Christ to that sinner and that God has given spiritual life to that sinner in the new birth (*Rom. 4:23-25; cf. Gal. 3:9*).