

National Church Establishments.

(Christ and the Nations 2—A Greater than Abraham)

Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?...Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:53, 56-58)

Question.—*How does the New Testament teaching that Christ is One greater than Abraham reflect the national character of His work?*

Answer.—The national, not merely individual, character of Christ's work is set forth in the consideration of His work as the One greater than Abraham. We must examine the points of similarity and contrast:

First, Abram is called out of his country and from his father's house to become a great nation and bring blessing to many people, Gen. 12:1-3; Christ left His Father's house, heaven, and came into this world to bring blessing to many, 1 Tim. 1:15; John 3:17; even to become a great nation, 1 Pet. 2:9.

Second, Abram is called to be the father of a new generation, or creation, of believers by faith in the promise and covenant of God, Gen. 11:8, 9; 13:16; Christ is called to be the father of a new generation, or creation, of believers by faith in the promise and covenant of God, 2 Cor. 5:17-19.

Third, Abram, which means "honored father," has his named changed to Abraham, "father of many nations," Gen. 17:5; and those who share his faith are the children of Abraham, John 8:39. Christ, too, is given a name by God, at which every knee shall bow, Phil. 2:9-11; and those who share in his faith are accounted his children, John 1:12, 13.

Fourth, By faith, Abraham sojourned in a foreign land in search of a city whose builder and maker was God, Heb. 11:8-10; Christ, too, sojourned amongst men in search of a city to be His bride, Rev. 21:2. It is a city to be set on a hill, Matt. 5:14.

Fifth, God made Abraham a rock, from which all believers came out, Isa. 51:1, 2; Christ is the everlasting rock of ages, Isa. 26:4 (אֶבֶן יְסֹודָיִם; 1) Cor. 10:4. It is a rock that shall fill the whole earth, Dan. 2:34, 35.

Sixth, Abraham spoiled the king of Elam (עֵילִם), and brought back the captivity of his people, Gen. 14:1-4, 13-16; Christ bound and spoiled the strong man to deliver His people and, thereby, brought back their captivity, Matt. 12:29; Eph. 4:8. This binding is to continue and be intensified in the future, Rev. 20:2, 3.

Seventh, Abraham, as the father of the faithful, paid tithes to Melchizedek, the king of Salem, signifying the superiority of the priesthood and kingdom of righteousness to come, Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1-10; which Christ came to fulfill, Heb. 7:17; and holds the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, Ps. 110. Notice, Abraham, like Christ, in the days of his flesh, pays tithes (*i.e.*, the temple tax; δίδραχμον/στατήρ) to the king/ruler for the upkeep of the true religion, Matt. 17:24-27; Ex. 30:13; 38:26.

Eighth, To Abraham and his seed, the promise of all nations being blessed was made, Gal. 3:7-9; which blessing was claimed by Christ, Who assumed the seed of Abraham, Heb. 2:16; and through Whom the blessing of Abraham is held forth to the Gentiles, or nations, Gal. 3:14-16, 29.

Ninth, Abraham's bride, Sarah, whose name means "princess," was to be the mother of many nations, Gen. 17:15, 16; Christ's bride, the church (*i.e.*, Zion), is to be the mother of nations, Isa. 66:6-12.

Tenth, Twice Abraham offered his bride to the heathen kings, Gen. 12:13-15; 20:1, 2; but the time for the nations to receive the bride of Abraham was not yet, therefore, she was, by divine initiative kept from them, Gen. 12:17; 20:3. With the coming of Christ, she shall be established in the houses of kings by divine power, Isa. 2:2.

Eleventh, Abraham bore a son first according to the flesh with his handmaid, Hagar, after Sarah, his lawful wife seemed barren, Gen. 16:1-3, 15. Afterward, the child of promise was born to Sarah, Gen. 21:2, 3. Paul tells us that Hagar is Jerusalem after the flesh, but Sarah represents Jerusalem which is above, Gal. 4:23-26. Thus, the Jews, who reject the house of Abraham, remain only one nation in the wilderness, Gen. 21:13, 14; whereas, in Christ, Who is the seed of promise shall all nations be blessed, Gen. 21:12; Gal. 3:16, 14.

Twelfth, Because of all of these promises which envision the faith of the true religion being carried to and established amongst the nations, Christ assures us that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, John 8:56. Though the promises were made to Abraham, they shall only be fulfilled in a greater than Abraham.