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## An Inquiry Into the Religious Experience of Abraham

Folmer B. Strunk

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AN INQUIRY INTO THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF ABRAHAM

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Western Evangelical Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Divinity

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by

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May 1968

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE

#### I. THE PROBLEM

##### Justification for the Study

Christians are generally thought of as being products of the New Testament. This statement is true, as far as it goes; but, the New Testament should never be too easily separated from the Old Testament. They are, in reality, one book. The New is a continuation of the Old. In every portion of the New Testament one may find references to the Old. Genealogies are quoted in the gospels. Christ himself makes references to the Law and the Prophets and the Writings. Paul bases many crucial points of theology on statements in the Old Testament. Therefore, if the Christian is to understand his salvation, he must see it in the light of the Old Testament as well as the New.

It has been the experience of the writer to note a wide diversity of opinion concerning the salvation of the Old Testament characters.

Discussions with friends and statements of various writings often reflect the opinion that those persons who lived before the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ had an inferior type of religious experience. To illustrate the confusion of thinking on this subject, the following statements have been selected from three well known writers.

One of the foremost proponents of dispensational thinking was C. I. Scofield. In the Scofield Reference Bible, the religious

experience of Abraham was described in the footnotes as:

The Fourth Dispensation: Promise. For Abraham and his descendants it is evident that the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15.18, note) made a great change. They became distinctively the heirs of promise. That covenant is wholly gracious and unconditional. The descendants of Abraham had but to abide in their own land to inherit every blessing. In Egypt they lost their blessings, but not their covenant. The Dispensation of Promise ended when Israel rashly accepted the law. . . The Dispensation of Promise extends from Genesis 12:1 to Exodus 19:8 and was exclusively Israelitish.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Steele, a highly respected writer of the Wesleyan persuasion, very clearly stated his position concerning the religious experience of all of the Old Testament characters in the following statements:

The Old Testament conversion was a moral change wrought by the will of the penitent, influenced by the Spirit of God, rather than a new creation or a new birth.<sup>2</sup>

There was no assurance of acceptance with God certified to the penitent soul, no witness of the Spirit, in fact no pardon. . . .<sup>3</sup>

There was no conscious indwelling of the Spirit in Old Testament saints because there was no new or spiritual man in which He could abide.<sup>4</sup>

In his recent book, The Promise of the Spirit, William Barclay described a position radically different from that of Steele. He said:

Great as is the power of the Spirit in creation in the Old Testament, still greater is the power of the Spirit in the lives of individual men. The great leaders of the Old Testament are men

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<sup>1</sup>C. I. Scofield (ed.), The Scofield Reference Bible The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Steele, The Gospel of the Comforter (Boston: The Christian Witness Company, 1897), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 34.



who possess the Spirit, who have been possessed by the Spirit, and in whom the Spirit dwells.<sup>5</sup>

It is not the purpose of this study to confirm or deny any of these statements. They are only presented in order to show the confusion of thinking which exists.

When it comes to understanding salvation, Abraham is of strategic importance. He is important because he is the father of the Jewish and the Christian faiths. He is important because of the covenant God made with him. So Abraham has been singled out for particular study. Several questions concerning Abraham come into immediate focus: Was he saved? How was he saved? What depth of spiritual maturity did he achieve in his lifetime?

#### Statement of the Problem

Therefore, it has been the problem of this study to determine the mode and extent of personal salvation experienced by the biblical patriarch Abraham.

## II. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The experience of Abraham was not representative of all Old Testament religious experience, but it did reflect on all those who followed him. His knowledge was shared with them and what he gained showed the potential for those who followed.

In order to understand more fully the historical context in which

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<sup>5</sup>William Barclay, The Promise of the Spirit (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 14.

Abraham lived, historical and archeological resources were consulted for background material.

The Bible was the major source of study, using the narrative accounts in Genesis as well as other portions of the Old and New Testaments. The study was, primarily, inductive; though other sources were consulted and authorities were quoted to support observations.

### III. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

#### Salvation

According to an article by Carl W. Wilson, the biblical concept of salvation involves three ideas:

Justification. Man must be freed from the judicial punishment of God and be reconciled without fear to God.

Temporal victory. This is victory over evil. The supreme victory was won by Christ over Satan. In the Church age Christ sends the Holy Spirit to believers so that they may work out their own victory over evil.

Final deliverance and blessing. This refers to Christ's second coming when he will deal finally with Satan and the consequences of sin. Also he will give immortal bodies to believers and usher them into a new heaven and a new earth.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Carl W. Wilson, "Salvation, Save, Saviour," Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 470.

The term "salvation" has a very broad meaning. It is involved in all phases of correcting the work of Satan and the consequences of sin. In general usage, it often refers to the initial act of justification mentioned above.

### Redemption

The word "redemption" is very closely associated with the word "salvation"; however, the word "redemption" has a more precise meaning. It denotes the means by which salvation is achieved, namely, by the paying of a ransom.<sup>7</sup>

H. O. Wiley said that the verbal form of redemption means literally "to buy back." According to Wiley:

The terms lutroo (λυτρωω) and apolutrosis (ἀπολυτρωσις) meaning to redeem and redemption respectively, were used by the ancient Greeks and also by the New Testament writers, to signify the act of setting a captive free through the payment of a lutron (λυτρώον) or redemptive price. The terms, therefore, came to be used in a broader sense of a deliverance from every kind of evil, through a price paid by another.<sup>8</sup>

## IV. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The primary function of chapter two was to provide background information which would help in understanding the person and experiences of Abraham. The critical question of the historicity of Abraham was

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<sup>7</sup>Everett F. Harrison, "Redeemer, Redemption," Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 438.

<sup>8</sup>H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), II, 230.

dealt with briefly. This was followed by descriptions of life in Ur of the Chaldees, the journey to Canaan, and Canaan itself. The chapter closed with a brief outline of the story of Abraham and the significance of that story.

Because of the prominence of the covenant in the story it seemed important to Abraham's salvation. Therefore, in chapter three the covenant was studied.

It was first necessary to determine what the covenant meant to Abraham. It was also necessary to determine just how far reaching the covenant was in terms of its promises, its conditions, and its binding qualities. The next step was to determine the mode and extent of personal salvation offered to Abraham in the covenant. This inquiry met with the surprising results that there is no salvation offered in the covenant.

Chapter three closed with a brief discussion concerning the significance of the covenant in its fulfillment and a summary.

Chapter four moved directly to the faith of Abraham and the significance of faith in the salvation of Abraham. Investigation was made of the Hebrew of Genesis 15:6. New Testament passages which comment on this verse and the experience of Abraham were then investigated for further meaning and support. The redemptive experience of Abraham was compared with that of the Christian, both as to source and result, thus climaxing the portion which dealt with the mode of redemption.

In chapter five, discussion was given over to the extent of salvation for Abraham. This attempted to answer the question, What depth of

spiritual maturity did Abraham achieve in his lifetime? The question was dealt with in terms of salvation potential, salvation demand, and the measurement of maturity achieved.

Chapter six was a summary of the study, including conclusions by the writer.

In the biblical portion of the study, the major English Bible used was the American Standard version of 1901. All Bible quotations were from the American Standard version unless otherwise indicated. Comparisons were also made with the Revised Standard Version, The Jerusalem Bible, The Amplified New Testament, the King James version, and Living Prophecies. Work was done in the Hebrew text prepared by the British and Foreign Bible Society and in Nestle's Greek text of the New Testament. For authoritative commentary on Greek grammar and interpretation, books and articles by the following scholars were consulted: Kenneth S. Wuest, A. T. Robertson, Marvin R. Vincent, Henry Alford, and Ernest De Witt Burton. Standard reference works used for resource material and commentary included Baker's Bible Atlas, Baker's Dictionary of Theology, Unger's Bible Dictionary, H. O. Wiley's Christian Theology, and the Wesleyan Bible Commentary.

## CHAPTER II

### A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ABRAHAM

#### I. THE HISTORICITY OF ABRAHAM

Before one can begin the study of Abraham as a person, consideration must first be given to the historicity of the man himself. When liberal scholarship first began to question the validity of the Pentateuch there was little or no factual evidence outside of Scripture to establish that the accounts read there were genuine and not myth. In recent times, however, archeological expeditions in the middle east have uncovered overwhelming amounts of evidence to support the historical surroundings of the patriarchs.

One of the men who has taken a very active part in the archeological finds in the middle east and who has written a great deal concerning this issue is William Foxwell Albright. Albright supports the general historicity of Genesis but not the accuracy of detail. He believes that the stories of the patriarchs were originally handed down in oral form and then written. However, he does not feel that this has destroyed their character. He says concerning the problem of the oral transmission of the record:

In many ways the orally transmitted record is superior, but it is peculiarly exposed to the phenomena of refraction and selection of elements suited for epic narrative, regardless of their chronological order. It is, accordingly, uncertain to what extent we adopt the traditional order of events or the precise motivation attributed to them. Nor can we accept every picturesque detail as it stands in our present narrative. But as a whole the picture in Genesis is

historical, and there is no reason to doubt the general accuracy of the biographical details and the sketches of personality which make the Patriarchs come alive with a vividness unknown to a single extrabiblical character in the whole vast literature of the ancient Near East.<sup>1</sup>

Charles F. Pfeiffer, noted author of conservative scholarship, also concluded that the accounts of Genesis 12-50 have been shown to be genuine history through the archeological discoveries of the last half century. Moreover, this evidence shows that:

. . .the patriarchal narratives fit in the period in which the Bible places them, and in no other. The clay tablets from Nuzi and Mari have helped us to visualize the political and social world in which the patriarchs moved.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the historicity of the patriarchs has been reasonably well established in this generation, how one interprets such history is affected by one's presuppositions. Pfeiffer said that the liberal will see the similarity between the religion of ancient Israel and that of the Fertile Crescent and conclude that the faith of the patriarchs was not unique. He said, concerning those of the neo-orthodox position, that they:

. . .will be content with the "essential" historicity of the Biblical records and stress the importance of a personal divine encounter as embodying the true "word of God."<sup>3</sup>

Assuming that these conclusions as to the essential historicity of Abraham are correct, the investigation of the story of Abraham will proceed on the basis that the Bible is the inspired and revealed Word of God

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<sup>1</sup>William Foxwell Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Charles F. Pfeiffer, The Patriarchal Age (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

and that it is accurate in historical detail.

## II. UR OF THE CHALDEES

Before the rise of modern archeological studies, the years 2,000 to 1500 B. C. were a complete blank, except for the events which are described in Scripture. It is now possible to trace quite accurately the movements of many peoples in the ancient world of the middle east as far back as 3,000 B. C. Some evidence of civilization goes back even as far as 5,000 B. C. Because of the lack of evidence to support the details of the stories of Abraham, higher critics of the past had placed these stories in the realm of fiction. They concluded that he was a legendary, prehistorical figure. The evidence uncovered in recent years not only shows the validity of such historical details as are revealed in the Abrahamic accounts, but moreover, shows that he lived at a rather late period in the history of the Fertile Crescent.

Ur of the Chaldees was located at the southern tip of the Fertile Crescent, near the Persian Gulf, in the region known as Mesopotamia. When Abraham lived in Ur, the Sumerians had lived for more than 1,000 years in southern Mesopotamia. The people, who had once lived in tents, then lived in huts of sun-dried brick. The spoken language of southern Mesopotamia was Akkadian. Sumerian had survived as the language of the learned.<sup>4</sup> Cuneiform script was being used in keeping records and writing

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-31



contracts. Such a contract would give the amount of money borrowed, the rate of interest, the names of the lender and borrower, and the date due. Such contracts were pressed into tablets of soft, moist clay with a three pointed stylus and kept in the archives of the temple for future reference.<sup>5</sup> The fertility of the land and trade from the Persian Gulf had resulted in a high degree of culture among the Sumerians. Ur was a city-state ruled by a king, the typical unit of government during that time in that country. Irrigation and flood control was provided by means of a system of canals connecting the Tigris and the Euphrates river valleys. The Sumerians produced the sexagesimal system of numbering (numbering by the sixties such as is used to reckon time on the clock). Standard weights and measures were used in the business activities of Sumer.<sup>6</sup>

The ordinary place of worship in ancient Sumer was a ziggurat. This was an artificial mountain, built in the form of a step pyramid, serving as the platform for a temple. The ziggurat at Ur was begun by Ur-nammu about 2350 B. C. and restored by Nabonidus about 550 B. C. It was a solid mass, two hundred by one hundred feet in length and breadth, and seventy feet high.<sup>7</sup> The deity worshipped in this temple was that of Nanna, the moon god, the patron deity of Ur. During the third dynasty of Ur (C. 2070-1960 B. C.), another temple was built for Nanna's consort,

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<sup>5</sup>G. Frederick Owen, Abraham to the Middle-East Crisis (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 17 & 62a.

<sup>6</sup>Charles F. Pfeiffer, Baker's Bible Atlas (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 47.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-48

Nin-gal. Also a treasury building and a palace for the high priestess were built during this time. This was about the time that Abraham and his father Terah lived in Ur and it is very possible that they saw these very temples.<sup>8</sup>

When Abraham left Ur, Sumerian culture was declining. This third dynasty ended when the territory was overrun by an Amorite from Mari, on the middle Euphrates, Ishbi-irra by name.<sup>9</sup>

### III. THE JOURNEY TO CANAAN

When Abraham left Ur with his father Terah, they followed the Fertile Crescent going north from Ur and stopped at Haran, a northern Mesopotamian city located on the Bilikh River about sixty miles from where it enters the Euphrates. They stayed there until the death of Terah. Haran was located on an important caravan route connecting Ninevah and Babylon with Damascus, Tyre, and Egypt. This city, like Babylon, was also devoted to the worship of the moon god. The region around Haran is thought of as the ancestral home of Abraham's family. It is also known as Paddan-aram (field of Aram). Abraham sent his servant there for a suitable bride for Isaac. Jacob fled there from Esau and there married Leah and Rachel, the daughters of his uncle Laban.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Pfeiffer, The Patriarchal Age, pp. 44-45.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 31 & 44.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 45-46.

In regard to the fact that Haran was located on a caravan route, it is interesting to note the significance of the term "Hebrew". (Abraham is referred to as a Hebrew in Genesis 14:13.) Albright said that the term Apiru or Abiru and later Ibri or "Hebrew" has been established to mean something like "donkey-man, donkey driver, huckster, or caravaneer." These were, generally, people of varied ethnic stock and were scattered from Elam to Egypt. Ur, Haran, and Nahor were trading cities. He also added:

Furthermore, all the places with which Abraham is connected in Syria and Palestine can be shown to have been important caravan stations; for most of them there is archaeological or documentary evidence of occupation in the nineteenth-eighteenth centuries B.C.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Genesis account, it was at Haran that Abraham himself actually heard the call from God to go to Canaan. According to Genesis 15:7, God told Abraham that He had brought him from Ur of the Chaldees. He was telling Abraham that He had been directing Abraham's life even before the time when He spoke to him in Haran. God had worked through Terah to get Abraham started toward Canaan. When Terah died, God then spoke directly to Abraham to keep him moving toward Canaan.

Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran to go to Canaan, taking his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his possessions, animals, and, probably, some servants.

#### IV. DWELLING IN CANAAN

The country known as Canaan lay along the eastern shore of the

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<sup>11</sup>Albright, op. cit., p. 6.

Mediterranean Sea and formed the western portion of the Fertile Crescent. It is primarily the same area of land which, in modern times, is known as the area of Palestine. During Abraham's time, the land of Canaan was under the control of Egypt.

There were numerous large cities in Canaan during the time in which the patriarchs roamed this land. And, though Abraham visited some of these cities, he apparently lived, for the most part, a semi-nomadic type of life raising large herds of sheep, goats, and cattle. At times he dwelt in one place long enough to raise and harvest a crop. Though he owned no real estate, he became wealthy and influential.

The patriarchs, apparently, lived in tents made of goats' hair, hand woven on small looms and sewn together into larger pieces. An average tent might cover a ten by fifteen foot area and be supported by nine poles arranged in three rows. Inside, the tent was divided into two compartments; the front compartment for the men and the rear compartment for the women and for storage of cooking pots and other utensils. Inside, the tent floor was the bare ground, possibly covered by straw mats or woolen rugs. Cooking was done outside near the front door. Cooking utensils included earthen vessels, goat-skin bottles, and possibly a sheet of metal for cooking bread.<sup>12</sup>

Among the places mentioned which Abraham visited in Canaan, two of the chief cities are Shechem and Beer-sheba. In Genesis, Shechem is the first city mentioned which Abraham visited after leaving Haran. It was

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<sup>12</sup>Pfeiffer, The Patriarchal Age, pp. 71 ff.

an important Canaanite city from 2000-1800 B.C. and also from 1400-1200 B.C. Today it is known as Tell Balatah and, as of 1961, was being excavated by the Drew McCormick Expedition. Palaces and streets have been discovered which date to the eighteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries B. C. It is noted for the well which Jacob dug there.<sup>13</sup>

Beer-sheba is also noted for its wells. It is still the market center for the Negev, as it apparently was in the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>14</sup>

Abraham apparently lived in peace with the Canaanites, though he maintained a standing army which was used to rescue Lot in Genesis fourteen. He, of course, differed greatly with the common worship of the land which was primarily Baal worship, noted for its fertility rites.

#### V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

The story of Abraham is told in the Scriptures in Genesis twelve through twenty-five. The story actually begins in chapter eleven, where it is shown that Abraham was a descendant of Shem, one of the three sons of Noah. Though Abraham had apparently been born and raised in Ur of the Chaldees, it is in Haran, where his aged father had taken him, that the real story of Abraham begins.

Terah had started out to go to Canaan. Perhaps he had heard from the Habiru or caravaneers about this country. When he tarried at Haran and died there, God told Abraham to go to a place that would be shown

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

to him. There he would develop the nation that would bless all the families of the earth. In this way the remarkable story of Abraham began.

The story of Abraham is the story of a man in history and, yet, it is so much more than that. It is the story of salvation--of how God worked through a man to bring salvation to the whole world. Little is told of the man Abraham aside from those particular occasions when God "met" him or "used" him and of the events surrounding those times.

There are fifteen basic stories about Abraham with brief transitional statements connecting them. These stories are:

- (1) The Journey to Canaan (Genesis 12:1-9)
- (2) Sojourn in Egypt (12:10-20)
- (3) Separation of Abraham and Lot (13)
- (4) Rescue of Lot from Chedorlaomer (14-15)
- (5) Birth of Ishmael (16)
- (6) Institution of Circumcision (17)
- (7) The Visit of the Three (18)
- (8) Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (19)
- (9) Abraham Deceives Abimelech (20)
- (10) Birth of Isaac (21:1-21)
- (11) Covenant with Abimelech (21:22-34)
- (12) Offering of Isaac (22)
- (13) Death of Sarah (23)
- (14) A Wife for Isaac (24)
- (15) Death of Abraham (25)

Abraham lived to be 175 years old; but, the stories which tell about him in detail cover only a relatively small part of his life. The real story is not that of Abraham, but of salvation--the salvation by God of a sinful and lost human race. God's dealings with Abraham are only one small part of His great plan of salvation for the human race. But, if understanding can be gained concerning this part of the unfolding of the plan of salvation, it may help to bring about further understanding of the whole plan.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ABRAHAM IN GENESIS

##### I. THE MEANING OF COVENANT

Some discussion should be given over to the meaning of the term "covenant," especially as it is used in the Old Testament.

Ordinarily, the covenant was a compact made between two individuals or between two tribes or nations. Each party bound himself to fulfill certain conditions, and was promised certain advantages. An oath was made invoking God as a witness (e.g. Genesis 31:50). To break such a covenant was considered a heinous sin.<sup>1</sup>

According to a study made by George Mendenhall of the University of Michigan, there were two basic categories of treaty or covenant used in the ancient Near East, during the second millennium B. C.<sup>2</sup> The two kinds of treaty were: (1) the parity treaty, or the treaty between equals; and (2) the suzerainty treaty, or the treaty between a king and his vassals.

The covenant ceremony described in Genesis fifteen was a suzerainty treaty. The "smoking fire pot and a flaming torch" depict the divine presence ratifying the covenant. This treaty:

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<sup>1</sup>Unger's Bible Dictionary, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>Pfeiffer, The Patriarchal Age, p. 86.

. . . finds its origin in the will of the suzerain (God) who recounts his gracious acts (taking Abraham from Ur) and declares his purposes with reference to Abraham. The patriarch is expected to exercise faith in the divine promise.<sup>3</sup>

The following covenants between God and man are mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures:

- (1) The covenant with Noah (Genesis 9)
- (2) The covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15; 17)
- (3) The covenant with Israel (Exodus 34:28; 24:3)
- (4) The covenant with David (II Samuel 7:12; 22:51).

Certain ceremonies were usually connected with the making of a covenant. After an ancient custom, the covenant was confirmed by slaughtering an animal and cutting it into two halves. The two parties passed between the halves to intimate that, if either of them broke the covenant, their fate would be similar to that of the slain animal. They would also often partake of a common meal, or at least a few grains of salt.<sup>4</sup>

The covenant which God made with Abraham is told in Genesis 15:18:

In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

The Hebrew word in this verse which has been translated as "Covenant" is berith ( בְּרִית ). It is the noun feminine singular of Barah ( בָּרָה ), which means "to cut." The noun form would be literally translated "a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Unger's Bible Dictionary, p. 224. Cf. William J. Deane, Abraham His Life and Times (in Men of the Bible, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n. d.), pp. 80-81.



cutting." The word karath ( כָּרַח ) was also used in this verse and also means "to cut." The Hebrew phrase in this verse is karath . . . berith ( כָּרַח . . . בְּרִית ) and would read literally, "he cut . . . a cutting."<sup>5</sup> The immediate context of these words was the ceremony which had just preceded in which God had instructed Abraham to cut the animals in two and lay them out, obviously, in preparation for making a covenant.

To Abraham, the covenant which God made with him was a solemn pact, demanding immediate and complete response. If Abraham was to reject the terms laid down by his sovereign, it would be a rejection of the sovereignty of God himself. On the other hand, if Abraham were to fulfill his portion of the covenant, he could expect that God would also fulfill His promises. This was especially true since God went as far as to ratify the covenant with the manifestation of his own presence.

## II. THE DEFINING BOUNDARIES OF THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ABRAHAM

Before one can deal adequately with the covenant between God and Abraham, it must first be determined just what that covenant was. In several instances God gave commands and statements of promise to Abraham. It may not at first be clear as to how many of these statements are a part of the covenant. Several questions can be asked to define the

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<sup>5</sup>The definitions given here for the Hebrew words have been taken from The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1963).

problem:

- (1) Was the statement in Genesis 12:1-3 a statement of covenant? What about Genesis 12:7 and 13:14-17?
- (2) If Genesis 12:1-3 was a statement of covenant, then were the statements in chapters fifteen and seventeen further refinements of this original statement or were they separate statements of covenant?
- (3) If the first real statement of covenant was in Genesis 15:18 then what were the previous statements in chapters twelve and thirteen?
- (4) How much was to be **actually** included as the covenant with Abraham?

In attempting to answer this problem, the first step will be to make a comparison of the various statements of promise as found in chapters twelve, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, and twenty-two. What was promised? What were the conditions outlined? What was the binding quality of the statement?

#### Comparison of the Promises

The promise given in Genesis 12:1-3 was in the form of a four-fold blessing:

- (1) Abraham would become a great nation.
- (2) God would bless Abraham.
- (3) Abraham's name would be exalted.
- (4) Through Abraham God would bless all the families of the earth.

Several observations should be made concerning this four-fold blessing. The statement, "I will make of thee a great nation," did not necessarily imply that Abraham was going to have an heir born of Sarai. There were other obvious ways in which Abraham could become the head of a great nation and, considering the age of Sarai at the time, the thought

of a son probably did not cross the mind of Abraham. The blessing that God would give to Abraham proved to be both spiritual and physical, though neither of these were stated explicitly in the promise. It was also not explicitly stated as to how all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Later Scripture reveals the purposes of God in Jesus Christ, but these could not have been evident to Abraham at this time.

According to Genesis 12:7, an additional promise was given to Abraham, "Unto thy seed will I give this land:". This was a more specific statement and actually promised descendants to Abraham. It was a further clarification of the first statement of the four-fold blessing. However, one must be careful not to press too much into this promise from the viewpoint of Abraham. It would still have been possible for him to have children without having them by Sarai. There was no indication of how much God meant by "this land." However, both the land and the seed were further defined in 13:14-17.

The promises which were given in chapter fifteen were the same as those which had already been given. There was, again, some further refinements of those promises; but they were, essentially, the same. The boundaries of the land were given (the River of Egypt and the Euphrates River) and Abraham was told that his heir would be the fruit of his own body.

In chapter seventeen, the promises were again renewed in verses six through eight. They were essentially the same as before, only they were increased in degree. It was made clear that the covenant would continue with the seed of Abraham. It was also made clear, in verses

fifteen through twenty-one, that the covenant would not be with Ishmael but with the son that Sarai was to have, whom they would name Isaac.

After comparing these various statements of promise, as well as that of chapter twenty-two, it can be seen that they are all virtually the same. From the time of the first statement of promise in chapter twelve until the final one in chapter twenty-two, there were further refinements and clarifications from time to time, but there were no essential changes or additions made. Thus, if one were to judge on the basis of the promises alone, he would have to say that all of the promises were the same and a part of the same covenant.

#### Comparison of the Conditions

The conditions which were given in chapter twelve can be broken down into three basic categories: (1) separation, (2) purity, and (3) obedience.

Separation. Abraham was to separate himself from his country, his kindred, and his father's house. In other words, he was to separate himself from all worldly ties. This was, in a sense, negative. However, there was also a positive side in that he was to separate himself unto God, to follow blindly to a place which had not yet been revealed to him. When Abraham went to Canaan, he did not know that this was to be his new land. It was not revealed to him until after he had arrived there. After his separation from Lot, the dimensions of the land were more fully defined to him. In addition, he was to keep himself separated from involvement with the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

Purity. This condition was not as much in evidence in the first statement of covenant in chapter twelve as it was later, especially in 17:1 when God said: ". . . walk before me, and be thou perfect."<sup>6</sup> However, the germ of the idea was in the statement in 12:2 when God said: ". . . and be thou a blessing." Just how much Abraham understood by this statement is unknown. If, at that time, he did not understand it to mean purity, it soon became clear to him.

Obedience. That Abraham was to obey was assumed in the very command. No alternatives were offered. A clear command was given and a definite response expected. The obedience of Abraham was fully tested in Genesis twenty-two in the offering up of Isaac. The results of obedience were given in verses fifteen through eighteen:

. . . in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed my voice.

The institution of circumcision, in Genesis 17:10-14, might, at first, seem to be an additional condition of the covenant. However, in verse eleven, it was stated that circumcision was a token of the covenant. F. B. Meyer has pointed out that the conditions for fulfillment of the covenant were signified by the rite of circumcision.<sup>7</sup> Circumcision was indelibly written into their very bodies to remind them

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<sup>6</sup>For further discussion of the meaning of the term "perfect" and how it is related to the idea of purity, see page 52 of this study.

<sup>7</sup>F. B. Meyer, Abraham; or, the Obedience of Faith (in Old Testament Heroes, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), p. 108.

of the conditions of separation, purity, and obedience. It is interesting to note that these same three conditions carry through into the New Testament Scriptures. Meyer has pointed out four passages which illustrate this point:

- (1) Separation: "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you, And will be to you a Father . . ." (II Cor. 6:17-18).
- (2) Purity: ". . . putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ;" (Col. 2:11) "Blessed are the pure in heart. . ." (Matt. 5:8).
- (3) Obedience: "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).<sup>8</sup>

As in the comparison of the promises, the same results were found in the comparison of the conditions of the covenant statements. The conditions were the same throughout. The emphasis of the conditions varies. Separation was stressed, for the most part, in chapter twelve. Purity received a major emphasis in chapter seventeen. In chapter twenty-two, obedience was stressed. But no essential changes or additions were made from chapter twelve on through the account of Abraham. Thus, if one were to judge on the basis of the conditions alone, he would have to say that all of the various statements of covenant are a part of the same covenant.

#### The Binding Quality of the Covenant Statements

The question here involved has to do with the repetition of the covenant statements. Though such statements were made on several different occasions, yet, only in chapter fifteen was there any evidence of an

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-112.

actual covenant being made. The answer to this problem would be found in the very nature of God. When God makes a promise, there is no danger of it being broken. He cannot deny himself. God made several promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, 7 and 13:14-16. God's word is sure. There was no need for Him to go through some ceremony and swear to a higher authority. There was no higher authority to appeal to. He had already spoken and it was absolutely binding. One logical reason for the repetition was to refresh the memory of Abraham. Years passed between each recounting of the promises. Another reason, which has already been indicated, is that each repetition brought further clarification and understanding for Abraham. As He spoke in chapter twelve, God's word was binding and there was no reason for a ceremony. Still, there is one found in chapter fifteen. God needed no confirmation of the covenant but Abraham did. Abraham had been sojourning in Canaan for a considerable time. He had been faithful to the commands of God and had separated himself from even Lot. He had not stained himself in any way by the local religions nor formed any local alliances with the Canaanites. He was an old man. He had received promises from Jehovah but he had been waiting a long time. He asked for a sign, something to help confirm his faith. The covenant ceremony was for Abraham, not for God. The ceremony was neither more nor less binding than the earlier covenant statements.

After studying the promises, conditions, and binding quality of the covenant statements, the following observations may be made in defining the boundaries of the covenant:

- (1) God made a commitment, in Genesis 12:1-3, that was more

binding and more certain than any covenant made by man.

(2) Each of the statements which followed were not separate covenants but were further refinements of the original conditions and promises given in Genesis 12:1-3.

(3) All of the conditions and promises of God to Abraham which were made in Genesis chapters twelve, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, and twenty-two are to be considered as part of the same covenant. He declared His Covenant in Genesis twelve. He illustrated it to Abraham in chapter fifteen. He further clarified and confirmed it in chapter seventeen. Finally, He tested Abraham's obedience to Himself in chapter twenty-two.

### III. MODE AND EXTENT OF PERSONAL REDEMPTION OFFERED IN THE COVENANT

A tremendous amount of revelation has come to man since the time in which Abraham lived. Jesus Christ himself has walked with men. The Apostle Paul has shared with mankind the relationship between Jesus the Christ and the seed which was promised to Abraham (See Galatians 3:16-29). Therefore, when a person today thinks of the covenant with Abraham, he automatically relates it to salvation through Jesus Christ. But Abraham lived before all of this revelation. When the covenant was presented to Abraham, he could not have realized all of the deep significance. He could not have seen the promise of a Messiah in the covenant. He could not have seen the potential redemption of all mankind in the covenant. He could not have seen in it the possibility of personal righteousness for himself. For, in the covenant, there is no explicit offer made of



salvation from sin in any measure. The promises made by God in Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:4-5 had to do, primarily, with the land and with a child for Abraham.<sup>9</sup>

In a directly related sense, Abraham did not receive righteousness through the covenant. How he received righteousness was very explicitly stated in Genesis 15:6: "and he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." This result (righteousness) was not because Abraham had kept the covenant but because he believed. Righteousness had not been promised beforehand on the basis of belief or anything else.

Somehow, Abraham had achieved through belief that which the covenant could never give him. This will be discussed more fully in chapter four.

#### IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE COVENANT

Even though the covenant did not offer personal salvation to Abraham, its fulfillment was important to the plan of salvation for the whole world.

That Abraham kept his part of the covenant is recorded in Genesis 26:5 when God said: ". . . Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

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<sup>9</sup>Harold Lindsell (ed.), Harper Study Bible The Holy Bible Revised Standard Version (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 22, footnote. cf. Kenneth S. Wuest, Galatians in the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1944), p. 89.

That God kept his part of the covenant is a matter of history.

God had said He would make a great nation of Abraham. This promise was initially fulfilled in Isaac, who was the potential for the many who were to follow and which became the great mass of people that left Egypt under Moses. This promise was also fulfilled in Ishmael (Genesis 17:20).

God had promised that He would bless Abraham. This became quickly evident during Abraham's sojourn in Egypt, in the wealth that he acquired there and which continued all of his life.

God had promised that Abraham's name would be exalted. That is was, is vividly illustrated in the account in Genesis 23:5-6 when Abraham was buying a burying place for Sarah. The children of Heth said to Abraham: "Hear us, my lord; thou art a prince of God among us."

God had said that through Abraham God would bless all the families of the earth. In a very pointed way this statement referred to Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham (Genesis 3:15 and Galatians 3:16). This also has been fulfilled in a broad sense through the Judeo-Christian heritage which has so influenced the world morally, socially, and politically. It has been fulfilled in the Holy Scriptures which have illuminated the minds of all who have read them and which were written down and handed on by the children of Israel.

According to Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; and 15:7-21, God also promised the land to Abraham and to his seed forever. However, the promise was modified in Genesis 15:13-16 as God foretold the four hundred years of bondage in Egypt. It was not until after that bondage that the children

of Israel went in to possess the land of Canaan.

The promise of the land was again modified in the prophecy of Jeremiah 25:11-12 which foretold the seventy years of exile in Babylon.

Following the Babylonian exile only a small group of Jews returned to Israel--approximately fifty thousand.<sup>10</sup>

Following the destruction of Jerusalem in seventy A. D. by the Roman general Titus, the Jews were dispersed throughout the world, many of them as slaves. That dispersion has lasted for nearly two thousand years. It was prophesied in Deuteronomy 28:62-66. The regathering of the Jews was prophesied in Deuteronomy 30:1-3 and in the following words from Amos 9:14-15:

I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild their ruined cities, and live in them again; and they shall plant vineyards and gardens and eat their crops and drink their wine. I will firmly plant them there upon the land that I have given them; they shall not be pulled up again, says the Lord your God. (Living Prophecies)

It was promised to Abraham that his seed would inherit the land forever. History bears out the fact that this promise has not yet been fulfilled. However, with the creation of Israel as a sovereign state in 1948 and the restoration of Jerusalem to the Jews in June of 1967, it would seem that God is, in this day, beginning to fulfill the prophecy of Amos 9:15.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the Israelites have apparently never possessed the land to the full extent of the borders

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<sup>10</sup>Richard Wolff, Israel Act III (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House 1967), p. 44.

which are given in Genesis 15:18. If the "river of Egypt" is referring to the Nile River, then this promise has not been fulfilled unto this very day, though the armies of Israel are holding ground very close to the mouth of the Nile.

#### V. SUMMARY

This chapter has dealt with the covenant which was established between God and Abraham. It was discovered that the covenant was a type of suzerainty treaty, a binding contract between God and Abraham. This contract plays an important part in the total plan of salvation which God has for man. However, it did not offer personal salvation to Abraham.

The study of the covenant does not offer any real answers to the question of whether or not Abraham was saved. This does not discount the value of the covenant. It does mean that it will be necessary to search further for knowledge of the salvation of Abraham and to see what that knowledge contributes to present day understanding of salvation.

Since it has been pointed out that Abraham's salvation is based on belief, the study in chapter four will be directed toward the faith of Abraham.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

#### I. FAITH AND ABRAHAM

In the book of Hebrews, there is a great chapter which is known as the faith chapter. It is the eleventh chapter. In it are mentioned many of the persons who lived and died in faith. Abraham stands out in this list as one of those men who have exercised great faith in the Lord. The faith of Abraham was so great that he has become known as the father of the faithful. It is the purpose of the present chapter to discuss how Abraham expressed his faith and what the results were.

#### II. FAITH AND SALVATION

As Abraham believed the promises of God and expressed his belief through action, he began fulfilling the conditions of the covenant. But, more than this, as he exercised his belief in the promises he was also exercising his belief in God himself. He was obeying God. He was separating himself from everything that had to do with this world and with his former life.

There was one part of his former life that was still with him and threatened to disrupt life in this new land. It was his nephew Lot. Perhaps Abraham had thought that the motives of Lot were the same as his own, but something came to pass which showed him differently. God was working in the life of Abraham. As Abraham and Lot separated, Lot made his way toward the plain of Jordan and the wicked city of Sodom. The

motive of Lot was made clear to Abraham. Separation was imperative for Abraham who: ". . . looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

As separation became complete so did belief. Belief manifested itself again in action as he refused the goods from the king of Sodom. Action was answered by confirmation from God as he said to Abraham: "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1). Belief mounted higher and he pressed for fulfillment of the promise of a seed. The request was answered by a greater promise: "Look now toward heaven, and number the stars . . . So shall thy seed be" (Genesis 12:5). Belief in the promise was belief in God. Setting his old life behind and obeying God completely, he received the blessing of belief: "And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness."

What happened to Abraham at this time? An investigation of the Hebrew text can help one to understand more deeply the meaning of this passage, Genesis 15:6.

The first word of importance to be considered in this verse is the word "accounted". The Hebrew form is  $\text{אָרְכָּן}$ . It's classification is Kal, imperfect, third person, singular masculine. It comes from the root  $\text{אָרַךְ}$ . According to the Hebrew Lexicon, the root has several translations. The following three have been chosen to give some idea of the possibilities of the word: (1) to think, purpose, intend to do anything, (2) to think regard, count as, and (3) to impute, reckon to any one what does not properly belong to him.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that it is the third

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<sup>1</sup>The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. CCLXXXVIII.

meaning here which has been chosen by the scholars in the translation of this verb. There is a basic theme running through the meanings of this word that it is a mental transaction. This might at first lend itself to the idea that righteousness was imputed to Abraham but not really imparted. However, one must hasten to say that the transaction was very real and had actual results, as was witnessed to by the continued story of Abraham. Furthermore, since a man's eternal destiny depends upon how God sees him, the shift of a view of unrighteousness to righteousness must take place within the mind of God if a man is to receive salvation. The idea that what Abraham received was something that did not properly belong to him is very important to the meaning of this verse. It would mean that neither his past actions nor the action of believing was "so much righteousness" and worthy of life, but that believing was a reliance upon the righteousness and grace of God, which God saw fit to reward with righteousness. John Skinner said that this transaction went beyond legalism and that Abraham found the ground of his acceptance in: "an inward attitude towards God. . . ." <sup>2</sup>

The transaction which took place may be likened to a mistake at the bank. If a thousand dollars is credited to a person's account by mistake, it is an action which takes place outside of a person's immediate sphere of influence. What the person receives is not that which properly belongs to him, Nevertheless, the action is real and results are

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<sup>2</sup>John Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (Vol. I of The International Critical Commentary, 43 vols; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 280.

real. The difference, of course, is that when God credits a man with righteousness there is no mistake involved. The state of the verb is imperfect. The definition of the imperfect state is that it shows: ". . . either incipient incomplete action (he began to look) or frequentive incomplete action (he looked repeatedly).<sup>3</sup> So then, the translation which conveys the state of the verb is "he began to account it". Belief was rewarded with righteousness. Contrast this meaning to what it would have been if the verb had been in the perfect state. The perfect state would indicate completed action.<sup>4</sup> It would indicate a specific action in response to the expression of belief. The meaning of the sentence would then be the statement of Abraham's belief followed by the statement that this belief was reckoned as righteousness. This would make the reckoning more the sense of defining Abraham's belief as being righteousness.

To further clarify the meaning of the sentence, consideration should be given to the word "righteousness". The form is noun, feminine, singular. The root is  $\text{כ} \text{פ} \text{ר}$ . According to the Hebrew Lexicon, it means to be just, righteous, or to be declared just or righteous. The definition for the noun form is (1) justice, equity in the administration of justice and (2) righteousness, justice of character and conduct.<sup>5</sup> It

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<sup>3</sup>Kyle M. Yates, The Essentials of Biblical Hebrew (revised edition; New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, n. d.), p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>5</sup>The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. DCXL.



is important to see from the definition of this word that it has to do with more than the mental reform suggested by Daniel Steele in the quotation on page two of this study. A change took place in the relation between God and Abraham. Skinner, in his definition of "righteousness," said that righteousness in this case meant: "neither inherent moral character, nor piety in the subjective sense, but a right relation to God conferred by a divine sentence of approval. . . ."<sup>6</sup> The change brought about in the life of Abraham affected both the outward conduct and the inward character. Concerning that which took place between God and Abraham at this time, Skinner said that it is a: ". . . remarkable approximation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith . . . ."<sup>7</sup>

One more item of interest in the Hebrew is the "waw consecutive" which precedes and is prefixed to the imperfect "he began to account". The waw consecutive is more than a simple conjunction. It joins the imperfect to its precedent which, in this case, is the verb "he believed." Moreover, it not only joins these two words but shows that the imperfect is a definite consecution of the precedent. There is a definite emphasis on result. The translation of the waw consecutive is "and, and then, and as a consequence, furthermore, and as a result."<sup>8</sup>

Adding together all of these ingredients, a meaningful translation of Genesis 15:6 is: "And he believed in Jehovah and, as a consequence, he

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<sup>6</sup>Skinner, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Yates, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

began to account it to him (or for him) righteousness."

When he wrote the letter to the Galatians, Paul quoted from Genesis 15:6 during the course of his argument. It is important to see how the New Testament writers viewed the salvation of Abraham. In the American Standard Version, Galatians 3:6 was translated as: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." Kenneth S. Wuest, in his book Galatians in the Greek New Testament, brought out some of the significance of the Greek text.<sup>9</sup> The Greek word for "accounted" was λογίζομαι. The word was used in the papyri as a business term. Examples of such usage are:

Put to one's account; let my revenues be placed on deposit at the storehouse; reckoning the wine at 16 drachmae the monochore; a single artabae being reckoned at 180 myriads of denari; I now give orders generally with regard to all payments actually made or credited to the government.<sup>10</sup>

The word may thus be translated in several ways crediting Abraham's "account" with righteousness. Wuest concluded:

All this does not mean, however, that Abraham's act of faith was looked upon as a meritorious action deserving of reward. It was not viewed as a good work by God and rewarded by the bestowal of righteousness. That would be salvation by works. But the fact that Abraham cast off all dependence upon good works as a means of finding acceptance with God, and accepted God's way of bestowing salvation, was answered by God in giving him that salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Wuest offered this translation of Galatians 3:6: "Just as

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<sup>9</sup>Wuest, op. cit., pp. 88-92.

<sup>10</sup>Wuest, op. cit., p. 89, quoting from Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary of the Greek Testament.

<sup>11</sup>Wuest, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

Abraham believed God, and his act of faith was credited to him, resulting in (his) righteousness."<sup>12</sup>

Concerning the interpretation of Galatians 3:6 Ernest De Witt

Burton said:

Neither the usage of δικαιωσύνη . . . nor that of λογιζεταί . . . is decisive as between the two meanings: (1) "it was attributed to him as right conduct," i. e., "he was accounted to have acted righteously," and (2) "it was reckoned to him as ground of acceptance." The general context, however, dealing predominately with righteousness in the forensic aspect, acceptance with God, decides for the latter meaning."<sup>13</sup>

On the word "righteousness" (δικαιωσύνη) Cremer said:

. . . We see therefore, that the Pauline conception of righteousness--which as to form always expresses a relation to the judgement of God--includes this special feature, namely it denotes the state of the believing man called forth by the divine acquittal.<sup>14</sup>

The study of the Greek in Galatians 3:6 complements much of what has been said concerning the Hebrew of Genesis 15:6. Abraham expressed belief in God by believing the promise of God. There was a resultant transaction between God and Abraham in which Abraham was accounted righteous. For further understanding of what this meant, the study now turns to Romans four.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>13</sup>Ernest De Witt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (Vol. XXXIV of The International Critical Commentary, 43 vol.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p.154.

<sup>14</sup>Cremer, quoted by Wuest, op. cit., pp. 91-92

### III. ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH

In the third chapter of Romans, Paul discussed the relationship of law and faith and their significance in the justification of the individual.

According to 3:20, Paul stated that no man can be justified by the works of the law. This is very clear, though it does not say that the law has nothing to do with salvation. The function of the law in salvation is also given in this verse; the law is the channel or tool through which sin is made known or revealed for what it is.

Justification is directly related to faith. Paul said in 3:28 that: ". . . a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

The principles which Paul gave in the third chapter were also operative in the life and experience of Abraham. Thus, in chapter four, Paul used Abraham as the example of the point he was making and, in so doing, interpreted some of the events of Abraham's life and their significance.

In Romans 4:1-8, Paul said that Abraham was not justified through works but through faith. This was very clearly stated in Genesis 15:6, which statement Paul quoted.

In verses nine through twelve, Paul showed that justification is not dependent on circumcision because Abraham was justified by faith before he received circumcision.

In verses thirteen through seventeen, Paul showed that Abraham and

his seed were not to inherit the land through any law but through faith. If the inheritance were restricted to those seed of Abraham who have the law, then the others would be left out. But the grace of God provides justification to those outside the law as well as those who have the law. And, if the inheritance is through faith, then it is available to all the seed of Abraham, as Paul showed.

As the chapter closed, Abraham was set forth as an example of justification by faith. He believed in the promise of God, in spite of difficult circumstances, and was accounted righteous. The person who believes in the promise of righteousness through Jesus Christ will also be justified on the basis of faith alone. Skinner said that what happened to Abraham was an: ". . . approximation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. . . ."<sup>15</sup> But Paul said that Abraham was justified. Moreover, he held up Abraham as the great example of justification by faith.

Paul's approach to the Genesis story and his interpretation of it is important to several phases of this study.

It is significant that Paul viewed the Genesis account of Abraham as accurate and the person of Abraham as historical. He made no argument about these critical questions but simply assumed them as he wrote. In regard to the accuracy of the chronological order of the story in Genesis, Paul went so far as to base his argument on the fact that Abraham was accounted righteous before he received circumcision. Thus,

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<sup>15</sup>Skinner, op. cit., p. 280.

it is obvious that Paul viewed the Old Testament Scriptures as completely dependable.

It is important to see that Paul did not set out to prove that Abraham was a justified or righteous man. He assumed that it was so on the basis of the Old Testament statement. His primary objective was to show how Abraham was made righteous and that this applies also to those living in the Christian era. Whether one is a Jew or gentile, Abraham is the father of them that believe and the pattern or example of the way to salvation by faith. Whether or not Abraham's justification was of an inferior quality will be considered in the next section.

#### IV. THE SALVATION OF ABRAHAM AND THE SALVATION OF THE CHRISTIAN

The question that Paul dealt with in Galatians was basically the same as that of Romans the fourth chapter, whether salvation is by the works of the law or through faith in Christ Jesus. He made his position unmistakably clear in Galatians 2:16 and 2:21. Justification is through faith.

The particular problem that was bothering the churches of Galatia was that of circumcision. Again Paul turned to Abraham for illustration on this problem.

The logical sequence which Paul gave may be outlined as follows:

- (1) Abraham was accounted righteous through faith (belief) (v.6).
- (2) Those who exercise faith (in Christ) are sons of Abraham (v.7).
- (3) The promise to Abraham--"In thee shall all the nations be

blessed"--was a statement of the gospel (v. 8).

- (a) It indicated Christ specifically. (The carrying out of Genesis 3:15).
- (b) It was a prestatement that the gentiles would be saved by faith.
- (4) Those who exercise faith receive the same blessing as Abraham for:
  - (a) The works of the law brings a curse (v. 10-12).
  - (b) "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (v. 13).
  - (c) A gentile may receive the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, "the promise of the Spirit through faith" (V. 14).

In verse seven, the fact that the exercising of faith makes one a child of Abraham is a remarkable statement. It demonstrates, again, that salvation has not a direct relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant but an indirect relationship. The basis of salvation is a one-to-one relationship between a man and God. A man believes in God (or in Christ). This is the reckoning of his righteousness (Galatians 2:16, 21 and 3:11; also 3:6-7). The vehicle which conveys righteousness or the bridge which closes the gap between man and God is not the Abrahamic Covenant but faith in God. Faith in God may be manifested in one way by believing the promises that he makes.

The faith-spiritual relationship between a man (be he Jew or gentile) and Abraham rests on faith in God and supercedes the blood line relationship of a Jew to Abraham his physical father; grace supercedes law (Romans 4:16). Before Jesus Christ came as a physical being, belief was manifested in the promises of God to Abraham. The promise of blessing

to all nations was directly pointed at Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). After the coming of Jesus, belief was manifested toward his very person. In both cases it is belief in the same thing or the same person. Belief in the covenant promise was not of a lesser quality than belief in Jesus Christ, since both were, in the final sense, belief in God. This argument is further carried out in Galatians 3:15-29.

Concerning the idea of the gospel in verse eight Wuest said:

The good news announced to Abraham was that some day the Saviour would arise out of his nation Israel, and that the Gentiles would be saved through Him as Abraham was saved. Thus, Abraham rejoiced to see the coming of that day (John 8:56). Abraham was therefore to become the pattern to all who would follow, of how a sinner, Jew or Gentile, must appropriate salvation.<sup>16</sup>

Marvin R. Vincent made a similar statement on the blessing:

The blessing is the messianic blessing of which the Gentiles are to partake--the imparting of the Spirit as the new life-principle and the pledge of future blessedness in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

The statement in the outline concerning verse nine is, of necessity, an interpretation. The blessing of "they that are of faith" and the blessing of Abraham are the same blessing. Romans 4:23-24 further underscores this position. It would be difficult to say that Abraham received any lesser blessing than did those who followed, especially when he was held up as the example and spiritual father. In The Jerusalem Bible this sentence was translated: "Those therefore who rely on faith receive the same blessing as Abraham, the man of faith."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Wuest, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>17</sup>Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), IV, 116.

<sup>18</sup>The Jerusalem Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966).



The blessing which the children are to receive is given in verses eight and fourteen: (1) justification and (2) the promise of the Spirit (or regeneration). If the blessing was the same for Abraham as for his spiritual children, then it means that he too received both justification and regeneration. In discussing what happened to Abraham in Genesis 15:6, Wuest made the following statement which actually involves both justification and regeneration:

Justification is the act of God removing from the sinner his guilt and the penalty incurred by that guilt, and bestowing a positive righteousness, Christ Jesus Himself in whom the believer stands, not only innocent and uncondemned, but actually righteous in point of law for time and eternity. [italics in the original] This is what God did for Abraham when he believed Him.<sup>19</sup>

Wuest further stated that: "Those who exercise a like faith to Abraham, share with him in the same salvation which he received from God."<sup>20</sup>

Vincent confirmed this in a further statement on the blessing of Galatians 3:8. He said: "This blessing Abraham shared on the ground of his faith, and believers shall share it as the true spiritual children of Abraham."<sup>21</sup>

He said further: "Believers are regarded as homogeneous with Abraham, and as thus sharing the blessing with him whose characteristic was faith."<sup>22</sup>

After investigating the Greek construction, Wilber T. Dayton said:

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<sup>19</sup>Wuest, op. cit., p. 92

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 94

<sup>21</sup>Vincent, op. cit., IV, 116.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., IV, 117.

Many insist that, since "justify" is primarily a forensic word, Abraham was only imputed or reckoned to be righteous. If so he becomes a poor example of God's kind of righteousness that is furnished to all through faith . . . And if God called Abraham righteous without at the same time making him so, would not God be found falsifying the records?<sup>23</sup>

After studying the Hebrew of Genesis 15:6 as well as Paul's comments on this verse in Romans four and Galatians three, the following observations may be made:

- (1) Abraham was justified through faith in the promise of God.
- (2) This is the same salvation that a Christian receives through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### V. ABRAHAM SAVED THROUGH

#### JESUS CHRIST

In the logical sequence which Paul continued to develop in Galatians 3:15-29, there was a point of interest found in verses twenty-four and twenty-seven. It was stated here that one is justified and becomes a son of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Jesus himself said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). It might at first seem to be impossible that Abraham was saved through Jesus Christ, since Jesus was not even born until some two thousand years after Abraham. A deeper look is required.

One of the mighty themes that runs throughout Scripture is the picturesque figure of the lamb. The first appearance of the lamb for an

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<sup>23</sup>Wilber T. Dayton, "Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," Wesleyan Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), V. 33.

offering was in the story of Abraham in Genesis twenty-two, when Abraham went to offer up Isaac. The final appearance of the Lamb was in the midst of the throne of God in the last chapter of Revelation. Throughout Scripture Jesus Christ is pictured as "The Lamb of God," just as He was proclaimed to be by John the Baptist in John 1:29. In this verse He was proclaimed to be the divine sacrifice for the sin of the world.

There is a reference to the lamb in Revelation 13:8 which is very interesting. The American Standard version has translated this verse as follows:

And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

It is interesting to note that this translation contains an inversion of the word order from that which is found in the Greek manuscript. The King James version had retained the Greek word order and had translated it: "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

It is also interesting to note that the Revised Standard Version has the inverted word order and so does The Jerusalem Bible.

John F. Walvoord said that most expositors favor the view that the phrase "from the foundation of the world" refers to the writing of the names in the book rather than to the death of Christ on the cross.<sup>24</sup> However, some conservative scholarship does not favor this interpretation. A. T. Robertson said that either construction is permissible and that either one makes sense. However, according to Robertson, the most

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<sup>24</sup>John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 202.

natural construction is to leave the words in the same order as they are in the Greek.<sup>25</sup> Vincent agreed with this position<sup>26</sup> and referred to the work of Henry Alford. Alford made the strongest statement on this problem. He said that the verse may be translated either way but that the order of the Greek wording:

. . . is far more obvious and natural: and had it not been for the apparent difficulty of the sense conveyed, the going so far back as to *ἡ ἐξπαγγελία* for a connexion would never have been thought of . . . The difficulty however is but apparent: 1 Pet. i. 19, 20 says more fully the same thing.<sup>27</sup>

When left in the original order, the words flow naturally and the meaning is not vague or confusing. Apparently, some have found it difficult to understand how the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross of Calvary can be referred to in these terms.

The translators of The Amplified New Testament have attempted to skirt around the problem with the following translation:

. . . every one whose name has not been recorded from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb that was slain [in sacrifice] from the foundation of the world.

Concerning the significance of these words as they are found in Greek, F. W. Dillistone said that it:

. . . has never ceased to fascinate the minds of thoughtful Christians. There is nothing quite like it elsewhere in the New Testament. A certain air of mystery hangs over it, though it seems

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<sup>25</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1933), VI, 402.

<sup>26</sup>Vincent, op. cit., II, 528.

<sup>27</sup>Henry Alford, The Greek Testament (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1870), IV, 677-78.

to suggest at least one thing clearly--that there is a quality of timelessness in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup>

It is precisely the timeless quality of this verse which gives it such impact. The event which took place on the cross of Calvary took place in time and is thus forever recorded as an historical event. But, to restrict the significance and meaning of the cross to history alone, separates the person of the cross--as well as the sacrifice--from the eternally existent Son of God and also separates that person and sacrifice from those who never saw it. For those who did not see the physical cross it must ever be viewed through the eyes of history. For a clear understanding of the cross it must be viewed through divinely inspired history, the Bible. For those who live on this side of the cross in point of time, the cross is seen through the writers of the four gospels who reviewed history. For those who lived before the cross in point of time, the cross was viewed through the prophets who previewed history. Which view is more accurate, the review or the preview? They are both equally accurate, both as to the purpose of the cross and as to the details of the events. Perhaps the most heart-gripping account of the crucifixion in all of Holy Scripture is that found in Isaiah fifty-three. It is difficult for men who are bound by time and space to view the cross in any other context than that of history. But how does God view the cross? From within the context of time? For Him who knows and sees the end from the beginning, the agony of the cross was just as real when He spoke through the prophet Isaiah as when He

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<sup>28</sup>F. W. Dillistone, The Significance of the Cross (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), p. 217.

cried out in agony on Calvary. In his comments on I Peter 1:19,20, Alford said: "That death of Christ which was foreordained from the foundation of the world, is said to have taken place in the counsels of Him with whom the end and the beginning are one."<sup>29</sup> In the mind of God, the cruxifixion was a completed fact when he prophesied of the seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15. It is to be considered in the same way as the victory which Christ won on the cross. The victory is complete today, though Christ has not yet returned to claim that victory.

The plan of salvation was prepared before the worlds were formed (Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 3:9-11). The kingdom of the redeemed was prepared before the worlds were formed (Matthew 25:34). And, in the eyes of God, the Lamb was slain before the worlds were formed. Jesus Christ is indeed: ". . . the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). It is the blood of Jesus Christ which takes away the sin of the believer today and it was the blood of Jesus Christ which took away the sin of Abraham in his day. For, salvation not only looks to the cross in belief of its promise but far beyond it, to a loving Father who is ever gracious to the one who will: ". . . believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Hebrews 11:6).

## VI. SUMMARY

Viewing the faith of Abraham through both the Old and New Testaments, one observes that Abraham was justified by grace through faith in God, apart from the law or the covenant. His particular redemption was the same as

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<sup>29</sup>Alford, op. cit., IV, 678.

that of the Christian. The redemptive blood of Christ purchased his justification and provided grace for his spiritual regeneration.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE EXTENT OF SALVATION

#### FOR ABRAHAM

##### I. THE SALVATION POTENTIAL

It has already been suggested that salvation has to do with more than the initial experience of justification. It has also to do with the entire work of God in correcting the effects of sin in the world. When applied to a particular individual, this means that salvation is something which goes on into life after one is justified and continues in correction of the sin-warped being mentally, physically, and spiritually.

It has already been observed that Abraham was justified through Jesus Christ. The question to be asked then is, what depth of Christian maturity could Abraham achieve? God is not limited to time and space in the bestowment of his grace. The work of the cross was just as applicable to Abraham as it was to Paul. To place any superficial limitation on the progress of salvation in a man's spiritual life, would be contrary to the will of God that all men should come to a fullness of knowledge in Him (Ephesians 3:19 and 4:13).

Three prime factors are involved in Christian maturity. They are revelation, faith, and discipline. Abraham did not have the benefit of the written Word of God as Christians have it today. Nevertheless, he did know God in a personal way and God did reveal to him what was expected of him. God made certain demands of Abraham which were based on



revelation of Himself and which, in themselves, revealed much about the nature of God and the nature of man. These will be discussed under the next section, THE SALVATION DEMAND. The faith and discipline of Abraham are manifested by his response to God. These will be discussed in section III., THE MEASURE OF SALVATION.

## II. THE SALVATION DEMAND

That the faith of Abraham was remarkable no one would deny, especially considering the conditions under which his belief was born and grew. That Abraham reached great heights of faith and dedication is obvious from a cursory reading of the story. But the story is also puzzling and frustrating when one tries to ascertain just what were the upper reaches of his faith. It is difficult to measure the spiritual level of a person on the basis of his successes because they are so often offset by the human failures of his life. But, perhaps, it is possible to measure the quality of a person by the demand which God makes upon him. For, God never demands more of a person than it is possible for him to fulfill (I Corinthians 10:13). In the case of Abraham, there is a climax in the seventeenth chapter which is very meaningful. According to Genesis 17:1, God said: ". . . walk before me and be thou perfect." The Hebrew word which has been translated as "perfect" is  $\square'p\ N$  (tamim). According to the Hebrew Lexicon, it is an adjective which means (1) complete, perfect (2) whole, entire (3) sound, without blemish, defect (4) perfect, upright, sincere.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. DCCLXIII.

George Allen Turner discussed the word "perfect" in his book, The Vision Which Transforms. According to Turner, the term occurs eighty-five times in the Old Testament. It refers to animals for sacrifice, to men, and to God. When referring to animals, it is usually translated "without blemish" or "without spot." Turner said: ". . . positively it means that such offerings must be animals that are not maimed or diseased, but sound, whole, healthy, and useful (cf. Eph. 5:27)."<sup>2</sup> When this word is referring to man, Turner said: "The perfect man is one without a moral blemish or defect . . . The English word which best translates this term is 'blameless' . . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The term is used to refer to both man's moral character and to man's outward walk. In Genesis 17:1, it refers definitely to the walk of Abraham. However, it is impossible to have a blameless walk without a blameless heart. Turner was quick to point out that this is not an absolute or unqualified perfection. It is a relative term which refers to one's conspicuous righteousness in contrast to one's contemporaries.<sup>4</sup>

Turner discussed a cognate form of tamim which is tom (תָּם). He said:

All told there are 6 synonyms formed from one Hebrew root (TM) and they are found at least 204 times in the Old Testament . . . The terms connote perfection, completion, uprightness. They emphasize the importance of spiritual wholeness in the man of God. Duplicity and vacillation are intolerable in one's relation to God. Here is a precedent for the "single eye" which Jesus said is necessary to receive

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<sup>2</sup>George Allen Turner, The Vision Which Transforms (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), pp. 42-43.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 42

spiritual light and wisdom from above (Matt. 6:22; Jas. 1:8). The man who bears this description is a man characterized by simplicity and straightforwardness, one whom God can trust.<sup>5</sup>

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has commented on the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8). His comments are significant and give further understanding to the meaning of the word "perfect." He said that there are two main meanings for the word "pure." One meaning is that it is single, without hypocrisy. "It means, if you like, 'without folds'; it is open, nothing hidden. You can describe it as sincerity; it means single-minded, or single-eyed devotion." He said that the second meaning is cleansed, without defilement.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Lloyd-Jones also made reference to Matthew 6:22 in his discussion of the word "purity."

After comparing the two studies of Turner and Lloyd-Jones, one sees that the meanings of "perfect" in Genesis 17:1 and "pure" in Matthew 5:8 are very closely associated. One must be careful not to press the "perfect" of Genesis 17:1 too far, since the word and its understanding were still in an early stage of development. In the area of ethical practice, Abraham did not have the benefit of all of the revelation which has come to man during the intervening years. Therefore, it was not possible for him to achieve the level of ethical practice that is today defined as "Christian." However, in the devotion of one's heart--the singleness of purpose--Abraham could be just as blameless and just as

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.44.

<sup>6</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), I, 111.

sincere as any man is today.

F. B. Meyer gave the basic thrust of the word "perfect" when he said:

A comparison of the various passages where it occurs establishes its meaning beyond a doubt, and compels us to think into it the conception of "whole-heartedness."<sup>7</sup>

This "whole-heartedness" is the same kind of thing which Jesus referred to in the great sermon on the mount when he said: "Blessed are the pure in heart. . . ." Jesus was speaking of singleness of heart, that devotion to one cause above all others which is expressed in the great command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind . . ." (Luke 10:27).

The demand that was made of Abraham was just; for, it was made on the basis of the revelation that Jehovah is "God Almighty". This was the climax of revelation which had begun with the first words of Jehovah to Abraham in Genesis 12:1. With each succeeding revelation of Himself, God made further demands on the faith of Abraham, reaching to this final climax. There was yet one more test which God put to Abraham in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. There was no further revealing of Himself, but there was a testing of the condition which God had demanded of Abraham in the seventeenth chapter.

Only God can make the final judgement as to whether or not

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<sup>7</sup>F. B. Meyer, Abraham; or, the Obedience of Faith (in Old Testament Heroes, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), p. 99.

Abraham walked before him blameless. Abraham's life, after that time, showed both overwhelming faith and human failure. The potential was there and the demand was there. The immediate response of Abraham was that he fell on his face. This would certainly seem to indicate complete submission to the will and demand of God. This demand which called for complete devotion and obedience was answered in chapter twenty-two of Genesis by obedience which was unquestionable, as Abraham went to offer up his only son, Isaac, to God almighty.

### III. THE MEASURE OF SALVATION

It is difficult to say just how spiritually mature any man is because man must always look on the outside. It is God who looks on the heart. Nevertheless, how a man appears in his outward actions is a reflection of what is in the heart (I John 3:7,8). By almost any measure that can be applied, Abraham was not found lacking in either faith or discipline.

Circumcision was the token of the covenant and signified the conditions of the covenant which were separation, purity, and obedience. It has already been noted that these same conditions carry through into the New Testament Scripture. Just as these qualities were evidence of belief in the covenant, they are also qualities which are necessary to belief in God. They have application to the covenant and to one's spiritual rebirth. The degree to which these qualities are manifested in the new life reflects the spiritual growth or depth of the individual.

There are numerous statements made about Abraham, as well as

recorded incidents, which display high quality in all three areas of separation, purity, and obedience.

Separation. Separation from the world is always important in the life of the redeemed. Abraham began this separation when he left his family and home in Haran. Further, he separated from Lot and refused to be closely associated with any people in Canaan. His statement of dependence on God, in Genesis 14:22, maintains this separation. The people of Canaan also recognized the manner of his life and the witness he bore to them. On the occasion of his purchasing the cave of Machpelah for a burial place, the children of Heth spoke to Abraham and said: ". . . thou art a prince of God among us" (Genesis 23:6). This separation was carefully guarded by Abraham right up to the close of his life, as he sent back to Haran for a wife for Isaac and as he sent his other children away to the east country just before he died.

Purity. From the very first, God had admonished Abraham that he was to be a blessing, a channel of blessing through which God could bless those who came in contact with Abraham, as well as those who would follow him in faith. That his life witnessed to the presence and purity of God was expressed by the children of Heth. His ability to stand before God and to intercede in behalf of Lot and any other righteous persons in Sodom witnesses to a cleansed heart. The command of God "be thou perfect" and the immediate response has already been discussed. Furthermore, the Lord said of Abraham: "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that

they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice" (Genesis 18:19). It is perhaps enough to say that the most difficult place to live a righteous and pure life is in one's own household. One of the most striking and mystifying experiences in the life of Abraham is his meeting with Melchizedek, as recorded in Genesis fourteen. Abraham received the blessing and the communion emblems and he gave a tithe unto Melchizedek; but, the thing that sets the purity of Abraham in bold contrast to the others present, is the mutual recognition between the two servants of God Most High.

Obedience. Abraham rose to his greatest magnificence in the quality of obedience. And the striking part is the simplicity of his response. In Genesis 12:1, God said: "Get thee out. . . ." The response was: "So Abram went. . . ." In Genesis 15:9, God said: "Take. . . ." The response: "And he took. . . ." In Genesis 17:1, God said: ". . . walk before me and be thou perfect." The response: "And Abram fell on his face." In Genesis 22:2, God said: "Take now thy son, thine only son. . . ." The response was: "And Abraham rose . . . and took . . . ." There is never the slightest indication of hesitance to obey the command of God, even at the price of his only son. God said: ". . . Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws (Genesis 26:5).

The witness of others. The final record of any man's salvation is made by others--especially by God. It is best to let the record speak for itself. Scripture says that Abraham was: (1) the father of

a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:5), (2) the father of all them that believe (Romans 4:11), and (3) the friend of God (James 2:23).



## CHAPTER VI.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### I. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

To begin the study, it became necessary to investigate the historical backgrounds of Abraham. The purpose of this was to understand better Abraham's cultural surroundings and his dealings with the peoples among whom he lived. The question as to the historicity of Abraham was given some consideration. Numerous historical and archeological resources were used as well as standard commentaries and reference works.

The study then moved to the biblical account itself. In Genesis the covenant is very prominent. Much of the action is prompted by it.

It seems at first that the whole significance of Abraham is because of the covenant. The study turned to the covenant. Understanding was sought to see what a covenant meant to Abraham in his day. The boundaries of the covenant were then determined by comparing the various covenant statements. Having gained some understanding of the covenant, it was then related to the basic problem of salvation. The answer was surprising. The covenant was an intergral part of the total plan of salvation. The covenant promise of the seed was an object of belief for Abraham. But, the covenant itself and the keeping of the covenant was not the source of salvation. Abraham's salvation came directly from God as the result of belief.

To complete the study on the covenant, consideration was given to its general fulfillment.

Turning to the New Testament to investigate further the salvation of Abraham, it was found that there is relatively little mentioned about Abraham in relation to the covenant. Most of the time, Abraham is used as illustration of salvation through faith in contrast to salvation by works of the law. It was found that Abraham was best known for his faith. By faith he received justification. Genesis 15:6 was probed more deeply to get its full meaning. This study was checked and enlarged through the study of related passages in the New Testament. It was found that salvation for Abraham was the same as it is for the Christian today. It consisted of justification and regeneration. When a Christian responds to God in faith, it is the blood of Jesus Christ which redeems him. The question of what redeemed Abraham also had to be answered, in order to establish the mode of his salvation. It was found that Abraham, too, was redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Having established the mode of salvation, the study then turned to the extent of salvation. This portion of the study was interesting, but it was difficult to draw any solid conclusions. The problem is to find a way of measuring the spiritual maturity of an individual. There are no convenient statements in Scripture which say: "This man was this mature." In order to gain some answers, both the potential and the demand for salvation were investigated. Then the conditions of separation, purity, and obedience were examined as to quality level achieved. Finally, what summary statements there are in Scripture were presented.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

The basic problem of the study had to do with the mode and extent of salvation for Abraham. As a result of the study the following conclusions were made:

- (1) Abraham's experience of salvation was the result of belief in the covenant promise, but it was not dependent upon obedience to the covenant.
- (2) Abraham was justified by grace through faith in God.
- (3) Abraham was redeemed through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.
- (4) Abraham achieved great depth of spiritual maturity. This was expressed through his separation, purity, and obedience.

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