

THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM AND THE NATION OF ISRAEL Gen. 12:1-3

- *Israel, God's special nation.* After man's failure at the time of the flood, and after the rebellion of Babel (Gen. 11), God called Abraham to be the father of a nation, the Jews. God's intention was that they would be a special people to Him, and a source of blessing to the whole world (Gen. 12:1-3; Deut. 7:6; 10:15; 1 Sam. 12:22; Is. 41:8). In knowing the Bible, it is important to understand that God sees all of earth's inhabitants as belonging to one of three groups: 1) the nation of Israel; 2) the church; 3) the "gentiles" (all others). 1 Cor. 10:32 makes this distinction (in this verse, the word "Greeks" is equivalent to "gentiles"). The remainder of the Old Testament, following Gen. 12, is mostly a record of God's dealings with His special people, Israel.

- *God's promises and covenant to Abraham.* When God called Abraham out of his land, He made some marvelous promises to him (Gen. 12:1-3, 7). These promises of blessing were later clarified and also formally made into a covenant (Gen. 15:18). Thus we have the important term Bible teachers call "The Abrahamic Covenant." This is God's covenant with Abraham and the nation of Israel. A covenant was a type of agreement in the ancient world between two parties, spelling out their agreement on certain things and indicating the responsibilities of the parties. Some covenants required both parties to do certain things for the covenant to be carried out fully. Some covenants required only one of the parties to be responsible to fulfill the covenant. In the Abrahamic Covenant God took upon Himself alone the responsibility to fulfill all of the promises of the covenant. Abraham was not required to perform anything on his part to fulfill the covenant. God demonstrated this in Gen. 15:7-15, when He ratified the covenant but was the only party to pass between the cut animals. If both parties had responsibilities to complete in order for the covenant to be fulfilled, then the two parties would walk through. God took all of the responsibility upon Himself to fulfill all of the promises to Abraham and the Jews, and He will fully carry it out by His sovereignty and power. Once a covenant is ratified, no conditions can be added (Gal. 3:15). All of God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled!

- *God's promises in the Abrahamic Covenant.* The covenant covered three realms of blessing. Firstly, there were personal blessings for Abraham: a great nation would come from him; his name would be great; he would be a blessing to others; all the families of the earth would be blessed through him; kings and nations would come from him; God would be his God; the land of Canaan would be his for an everlasting possession. Secondly, there were national blessings for Abraham's descendants, the Jewish nation: the guarantee of a continued national existence and greatness; the promised land of Canaan to be theirs forever; and the lasting nature of the Covenant itself; God would be their God. Thirdly, there would be universal blessings to all the nations through Abraham's descendants. In this last category we can see the blessing given to the nations by the Scriptures that came from the Jews, as well as the testimony of the miracles God performed for them. Ultimately, the greatest blessing is from Jesus Christ, the promised "seed" (Gen. 3:15) who was a Jew descended from Abraham (Matt. 1:1). (See Gen. 12:1-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 18:17-19; 22:15-18) Overall the Covenant had to do with the land, the seed (Abraham's descendants), and the blessings.

- *The complete fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant lies in the future.* The promise of the land became clearer through the Palestinian Covenant, a sub-covenant to the Abrahamic Covenant (Num. 34:1-12; Deut. 30:1-10). The Jews' lasting possession of the land (larger than the current state of Israel) will happen at the end of this age (Deut. 30:3-6). The promise related to the seed was expanded in the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:4-17) and will be fulfilled when Christ rules on the "throne of David" during the next age of 1,000 years and into eternity (Lk. 1:32-33). The blessings promised to Abraham are stated as spiritual blessings under another sub-covenant, the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Rom. 11:25-27; Heb. 8:6-13). This covenant finds fulfillment for national Israel upon Christ's return.