

## THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ABRAHAM.

"In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Genesis 12:3.

The first gospel found the first sinners in a beautiful Oriental garden where they had enjoyed an ideal environment. At a later stage in its development the gospel was revealed to Abraham, whose circumstances and surroundings were quite different from those of our first parents. This time the gospel reached down into a heathen home in that Oriental city of Ur of the Chaldees- a home where Abraham's father served other gods, as did also his grandfather.

Note the prominence given to Abraham in Scripture. He is the principal subject of twelve or more chapters in Genesis. His name appears in the first verse of the New Testament, and in the song of Mary and the song of Zacharias in Luke, chapter one. The promise to Abraham must have been in the mind of Peter at Pentecost, Acts 2:39. Paul in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 deals largely with Abraham. Repeatedly in Scripture Abraham is given the distinction of being the friend of God.

In Genesis 12:3, we find the promise which is the gospel pre-announced to Abraham. The words of this promise with slight variations are found several times in the book of Genesis, then in the New Testament in Acts and in Galatians.

"The principal thing (in the promise) is that all mankind shall be blessed in Abraham and his seed. This statement is repeated five times in Genesis alone. As the whole promise to Abraham and his seed is the central fact in our record of the Patriarchs, so the clause of blessing to mankind is set forth as central in the promise itself. That is the heart of the heart of the book of Genesis."

- Beecher.

The apostle to the Gentiles, in his appeal for the gospel of the cross without the yoke said, "And the Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed", Gal.3:8. Let us consider in particular two things about this promise; first, its Messianic Message, and second, its Missionary Motive.

Already in the first gospel of the Redeemer had been proclaimed as the seed of the woman. Now it is narrowed down to the seed of Abraham. "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ," Galatians 3:16. Whatever else may be included in the promise to Abraham, the apostle makes it quite clear that it contains a Messianic Message. It points direct to Christ, through whom the blessing would come. A most distinctive feature then of the gospel preached to Abraham, in the heart of the heart of the book of Genesis, is first of all, Christ.

Then inseparably connected with this is its missionary motive. The promise points directly to Christ as the Savior of the world. It foreshadows the world-wide scope of the gospel. John 3:16 Through the seed of Abraham, which is Christ, all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Hence the book of Genesis may well be put at the head of the list of books on the subject of missions. It is the first inspired book on missions, while the book of Revelation brings the crowning missionary message of the sacred canon as it pictures "A great multitude, which no man can number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the thrones of God and before the Lamb", offerings their praises unto God and unto the Lamb; and as it pictures the Holy City with the nations of the earth walking amidst the light thereof, and the kings of the earth bringing their glory into it.

How clearly Abraham comprehended the gospel preached to him we are unable to say. This we do know that he evidently had "implicit faith and instantaneous obedience"; that God not only chose him, but found him faithful and made with him a covenant. Nehemiah 9:7-8. He had a faith in what was humanly impossible with respect to the birth of Isaac, and with respect to his being raised from the dead if necessary. In the sacrifice and restoration of Isaac did he not see a foreshadowing of the death and resurrection of Christ? We know that he had some conception of and faith in a Savior to come since Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad," John 8:56. We know, too, that like Abel his name is high on the roll of heroes of faith, that they that are of faith are the children of Abraham, and that through this faith all the nations of the earth are to have the blessings of salvation.

Faith issuing in obedience was very real in the life and experience of Abraham. It meant a life of separation, sojourning, sacrifice. Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19. At the same time all of this was indispensable in God's plan and program for him. The same principles hold good for His witness today. Only a faith that controls the life can build the church around the globe.

Abraham "in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be." Rom. 4:18. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29.

*As expressed in the words of a great Bible teacher:*

Like the gospel preached to Abraham, the whole Bible has in view all the nations. Here in brief is the progress of that thought. First, Genesis Chaps. 1-11, The Nations helpless in the grip of sin. Second, Genesis 12 through Malachi, the development of the Promise to Abraham of a Savior from sin, which promise included 'all the nations of the earth'. Third, The Gospels, the life, death and resurrection of the Savior from sin. Fourth, The last command of the Savior to disciple "all the Nations" (Matthew 28:20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8) Fifth, Acts and the Epistles, the discipling of all the nations. Sixth, Revelation, the Nations before the throne in heaven (7:9)."

Like Abraham, you and I are called of God to be a blessing to the whole world. "We are "blessed in order to be a blessing to the whole world. That has been God's plan for the individual believer and for the Church from the very beginning. Is His plan being fulfilled in your life? Count your blessings, and then ask yourself the question, Am I using all my blessings to be a blessing to the whole world?"

"We've a Savior to show to the nations,  
 Who the path of sorrow has trod,  
 That all of the world's great peoples  
 Might come to the truth of God".