

# Trinity 13, 2019

## Seeds of the Promise

Galatians 3:16-22

St. Andrew's Church, Jacksonville, OR

By Fr. Bill Baker

*"Now to Abraham and his **seed** were the **promises** made."* Have you ever made a promise? Have you ever been the recipient of a well-intended pledge to assist you in a time of need? Promises have a special significance to the human psyche and indicate a desire to promote success and/or relief for the intended recipient. The very need of a promise indicates a need for some kind of intervention. Paul is reminding us that Abraham lived in a time when a promise from God became crucial to the future of mankind...and intervention became required for our future victory. But what kind of promise was this? Was something new on the horizon OR was God simply remembering a promise already in motion?

You remember the story. Adam and Eve, being convinced by Satan that God didn't really mean what he said, took Satan's side and defiled mankind's eternal relationship with our Lord for the simple anticipation of a false promise. The fools says in their heart that there is no God but, Satan's convincing promise to Adam and Eve inclined them that they too could be gods if they were willing to follow to him. The first covenant made between God and mankind occurred at this juncture of promises where God's intervention is expressed most overwhelmingly, *"And the Lord God said unto the serpent...I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"* (Gen. 3:15). A provocative promise indeed and a promise that would not give way to a clear understanding for quite some time.

From the time of Adam and Eve to Abraham epochs had come and gone and the human race was far from living just lives following the will of God. And God chose this moment in history to focus in on a man named Abram and show that His promise, given so long ago in a garden, was not a failed promise but an eternal promise with everlasting significance. It was time to reveal a little more of the promise. And

Abram, who would later be known as Abraham, would be ensured that through him many nations would be born and that 'He' God Almighty would be a God unto Abraham and a God unto his seed.

And seeds don't fall far from the tree. After wrestling with God through the night Jacob, the grandson of Abraham and Sarah, in a relentless struggle not to give up in his desire for a blessing, was granted his blessing and was hereafter known as Israel. God, in a continuation of His promise, is separating a people unto himself! It would be through Abrahams grandson Jacob that the nation of Israel would have its beginning. Many nations have sprung forth from the seeds of Abraham, but one nation (Israel) will stand out against impossible odds...perfect odds for the God of gods.

A second promise stems from God's interaction with Abraham when God instructs Abraham to take his son Isaac to a place called Moriah and to offer him as a 'burnt offering'. Abraham, in complete faith, follows the will of God and prepares the sacrifice. You know the story. In the end, in response to Abrahams faithfulness, God provides for the sacrifice thereby saving Isaac's precious life...Isaac who would one day be the father of Jacob (Israel). And we read in Genesis that "*... Abram believed the Lord and it was accounted to him as righteousness*" (Gen. 15:6). And God tells Abraham, "*...your very own son shall be your heir.*" And he brought him outside and said, "*Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.*" Then he said to him, "*So shall your offspring be.*" And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:4-6). Did you catch the subtlety here? For his faith Abraham is brought into a state of righteousness. God is going to do the work here and Abraham is going to look away from his own self-indulgent ways and trust in God...he believed the Lord and responded! The faith of Abraham so glorifies God that God responds with an ultimate justification that brings Abraham into a righteous relationship with the Father...a justification that will be offered to the seeds formed in this covenant. Yes, Abraham will sin again but he has been forgiven all his sins past, present and future and will not suffer the condemnation that sin requires.

And here in lays the third promise, again subtly hidden in Genesis 17,

*“And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you”* (Gen. 17:7). Now we must ask, who is the offspring to which these everlasting promises are made? We see that through the seed of Abraham the nation of Israel is born and will be a permanent example of Gods dealings with mankind until the coming of a new heaven and a new earth. Israel is truly a biological progenitor of the seed of Abraham, a fleshly passing on of genes. But, while this is significant, it is not the central theme of God’s promises.

Who are the heirs of the promises? In Genesis 17:4 as Abraham is on his face God speaks to him saying *“As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shall be a father of many nations.”* You hear that? Not of one nation but of MANY nations. Abrahams descendants will not reside within the bounds of one nation but will be culled from several nations. If we go back to Genesis 12:3 we see support for this interpretation as God communes with Abraham *“...and in thee (God says) shall all families of the earth be blessed.”* And so we derive that the seeds of Abraham will inherit the blessings of God’s promises and that those seeds will be from several nations over all the earth. Israel may be the example whereby God made himself known but it is the seed of faith that promises salvation to all who share in the body of Christ. You see, it goes all the way back to the garden, *“And the Lord God said unto the serpent...I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”*

And we are now back to Paul’s words to the Galatians: *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (that is, made one in the body of Christ) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (And here is where Paul sets everyone straight) *“And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:26-29).

A grand promise was made and an intervention put in motion because of mankind’s failure to desire an exclusive relationship with the Father. Eternal salvation and a right relationship with our Father in heaven was the task at hand. Ultimately this promise would be fulfilled through the final seed, the ‘head bruiser’ of the garden...Jesus Christ. We, as non-

Israelites, are grafted into the Jewish nation as a branch seeking the life found in the Jewish roots of Jesus Christ. We must support and pray for our Jewish brethren because it is through them that God chose to bring the salvific work of Christ into the world and to make those who are the seeds of faith heirs to the kingdom.

“Who then are the heirs of the precious and very great promises made to Abraham and to his seed? You are. To whom can it be said: Your sins are forgiven; God is for you; with all his power, goodness, and mercy he will pursue you all your life, and you will rise from the dead; your name will be great; your assembly as the stars of the heavens; you will possess the gates of your enemies, and the land of Israel and all the earth will be your inheritance; and you will fill the new world with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord? To whom can all this be said? To you, the children of Abraham through faith in Christ” (John Piper). *“For all things are yours . . . Says St. Paul, whether the world or life or death or the present or the future, all (the promises!) are yours, for you are Christ's and Christ (the seed of Abraham) is God's”* (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.