

Appendix B - The Israel of God

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“. . . . For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. . . . If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Romans 9:6,7; Galatians 3:29)

Part I

God’s plan for the redemption of sinners is intricate and beautiful. His plan involves two aspects of salvation: Justification and sanctification. Justification is an administrative process. God justifies sinners and when they appear in His courtroom, they appear to be clean and sinless (just as though they never sinned). On the other hand, sanctification is a lifelong process that involves transforming a rebellious sinner so that he can enjoy being close to God and living with the holy angels.

There is no question that God loves every person on Earth. We are His creation. The plan of redemption is huge, intricate, and beautiful. God determined from the beginning of sin that certain people whom He has chosen to be trustees of His gospel will broadcast His gospel to the world. Because the plan of redemption has transforming power, because it is enormous in scope and purpose, because billions of human beings would appear and disappear on Earth before the plan of redemption is completed, God determined that His trustees would be well-informed about His plan and representatives of His love.

God Established a Trust

In simple terms, a living trust is an arrangement in which one person (the grantor) transfers something of value to a second person (the beneficiary) through the efforts of a third person (a trustee). Trusts are used to distribute assets for a variety of reasons. If a grantor is too busy with other matters, if he is out of the country, or if he is too ill to take care of matters himself, that grantor can establish a living trust and turn the distribution of his assets over to his trustee. Of course, when a trustee agrees to serve a trust, he makes a promise to the grantor to carry out the grantor’s wishes. Usually, the grantor’s desires are clearly stipulated in the trust so that there can be no misunderstanding between the grantor and trustee. Typically, a trustee is well paid for his services because the fiduciary responsibility imposed upon the trustee is significant.

A living trust is different from a testamentary will. A testamentary will is a document in which one person declares that his assets are to be given to another person or persons after he dies. The major difference between a testamentary will and a living trust is that a will takes effect upon a grantor’s death, whereas a living trust can become effective immediately, while the grantor is alive.

I have presented the essential differences between a testamentary will and a living trust so that you can see why God established the plan of redemption as a living trust instead of a

testamentary will.

God designed the plan of redemption as a living trust for two reasons. First, God is changeless^[1] and His gospel is eternal.^[2] *Although faith in God is expressed in different ways and at different times, the foundation of redemption never changes. Faith in God is an eternal prerequisite because there is no other way that finite beings can honor, love and worship an infinite God of love.*^[3] God established the plan of redemption as a living trust so that the enormous blessings and benefits of His eternal gospel* could be disbursed immediately to all mankind (the beneficiaries).

***Note:** The eternal gospel is defined as a comprehensive body of knowledge that includes the truth about the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, their love for created beings, their judicial processes, the offer of redemption, and the principles underlying the wise and righteous laws of God Almighty.

Second, God, in His infinite wisdom, foreknew that “servant leadership” was the best way to disburse *the light* of His eternal gospel to those in darkness. Servant leadership occurs when one brother (that is, an enlightened trustee) serves another brother (the beneficiary who lives in darkness) on behalf of a grantor (God). It was God’s plan for the whole world to witness a practical representation of His love, as well as a proclamation of light through His servants (His trustees). God wanted the world to discover that whenever people see one of His humble trustees, they see a glimpse of God Himself.^[4] To make His living trust viable, God gave His trustees many advantages (intellectual, spiritual, and physical). He also paid them well and gave His trustees wealth to carry out their task. From the beginning of sin, God has used trustees to disburse the benefits of His gospel to His beneficiaries who are in spiritual poverty and darkness.^[5] Unfortunately, Bible history indicates that as a body of people, God’s trustees have been very poor performers. They typically end up in a hopeless state of arrogance and ignorance.

Before we get into the meat of this topic, please keep this thought in mind. This study consists of two segments. The first segment focuses on God’s use of trustees. The second segment focuses on the importance of being an heir of Abraham. These two topics are intimately related and very important. I find these copies are much easier for most people to understand if “the big picture” concerning trusteeship is told first, making the concept of God’s elect easier to understand. Therefore, the first part of this study will focus on “the big picture” concerning God’s use of trustees.

Look at the list below and notice seven groups of trustees. After sin is destroyed and Earth is made new, the redeemed of all ages will serve as trustees of God’s eternal gospel. In other words, the benefits that God (the Grantor) wants distributed to His beneficiaries (the whole universe) will never end and the trustees who will deliver God’s assets to the universe will be those who overcame the temptations of the world through faith in God! Please consider this list of trustees for a moment:

Seven Groups of Trustees

1. The patriarchs
2. The family of Abraham
3. The nation of Israel
4. The Christian church
5. The Protestant movement
6. The 144,000
7. The redeemed of all ages

1. The Patriarchs

Ironically, the first trustee of the plan of redemption was Adam, the same man who brought sin and condemnation upon all mankind! God revealed to Adam the essential elements of redemption. In turn, Adam was commissioned to teach his offspring about sin and God's plan for redemption. The firstborn male of each generation inherited the privilege of becoming a servant leader of the gospel. If each trustee carried out his responsibility, every household on Earth would hear the gospel and benefit from its provisions. But Cain, Adam's firstborn son, did not want to be a servant leader. Cain was arrogant and he followed the inclinations of his carnal heart. Cain showed disrespect for God by deciding, for himself, how God should be worshiped. He offered fruit instead of the prerequisite lamb and God showed no respect for Cain's offering. When God acknowledged Abel's offering, Cain was outraged that God gave Abel higher honor than "the firstborn of mankind." Later, Cain killed his younger brother out of jealousy.

When Adam and Eve were 130 years old, Eve gave birth to Seth.^[6] By studying Adam's ancestry down to the time of Noah and the flood, we learn that with the exception of Cain, the trusteeship of the gospel was passed down to the firstborn of each generation. These trustees are called the patriarchs (or the elders) because a patriarch is respected as a person of experience, a person having acquired wisdom and understanding. Evidently, many of Adam's offspring followed in Cain's footsteps.^[7] The Bible indicates that the trustees began to preach the Word of the Lord (that is, they began to preach to those who should not have been living in darkness) when Enosh was born to Seth.^[8] Corporately speaking, the behavior of the world went from bad to worse. By the time Noah was born, most of the people on Earth wanted nothing to do with God or His redemption. When the flood occurred, only one trustee remained on Earth and ironically, Noah's family was the only beneficiary.^[9]

Notice the lineage of the ten patriarchs who lived between Adam and Noah's flood:

Adam - Seth - Enosh - Kenan - Mahalalel - Jared - Enoch - Methuselah - Lamech - Noah

Two interesting facts emerge about the patriarch's trusteeship. First, there were ten patriarchs. According to the genealogical records given in Scripture, the lifetimes of these ten men covered a period of approximately 1,656 years. Ten linear trustees suggest that the Earth's population before the flood was quite small – perhaps a few hundred thousand.

The second element that stands out about the trusteeship of the patriarchs is the significance of being a firstborn son. Evidently, God used the special joy and affection given to the *firstborn*

son as an object lesson to teach mankind that one day, His only begotten Son, the faithful and true Trustee of Redemption, would come to Earth and redeem us with His blood. As a practical matter, the firstborn was especially honored because they practiced the maxim, “age before beauty.” It was understood in Bible times that the firstborn would be more experienced and wiser than his siblings and the family gave a certain level of respect to the eldest sibling.

God Abandons the Patriarch Policy

Noah was the last of the pre-flood patriarchs. As far as we know, Noah’s sons did not walk with God as did their father. It is astonishing that within a mere 150 years after the flood, Noah’s descendants built a tall tower to protect themselves from another flood. It seems incongruous that people did not believe God’s promise that He would never again destroy the world with a flood! Noah’s descendants even ignored frequent sightings of the rainbow! God saw the rapid degeneration caused by man’s rebellion and He deliberately separated the people of Earth into groups by language. This simple act caused mankind to disperse throughout the world. Shortly after the dispersion, God divided the Earth. He pulled one land mass into several continents and this further isolated mankind from one another.^[10]

The Bible traces the birth of Abraham from Noah through Shem, Japheth’s younger brother.^[11] If I have calculated correctly, Abraham was about seven years old when Noah died. If Noah lived out the remainder of his life in the area around the mountains of Ararat, then it seems likely that Abraham did not meet with the ancient patriarch. Noah died at the age of 950 years and so did the trusteeship and legacy of the patriarchs that began with Adam.

2. God Started Over With Abraham

After Noah’s flood, God skipped over nine generations that descended from Noah to start over with a new set of trustees. He looked down on the Earth and found an open-hearted man named Abram. Abram favorably responded to God’s call and invitation to be a trustee.^[12] It is important to also note that Abram (later called Abraham) was not in a biological line to receive a trusteeship passed down to the firstborn. In fact, it is highly doubtful that Abraham was the firstborn of his father, Terah, but God was starting over and Abram was, for the most part, an honest man.^[13]

Abraham walked with God and he became a friend of God. After testing Abraham’s faith, God purposed to make Abraham’s “non-existing” descendants into a family of trustees. In other words, God “dusted off” the trusteeship of the eternal gospel He originally gave to Adam and implemented it again. This time, however, the trusteeship would not be passed along to the firstborn son, but instead, the trusteeship would be passed along to Abraham’s family. Abraham can be called “the father of the faithful” because every descendant who trusted in God as did Abraham would be considered a trustee of the gospel. Faithfulness was far more important to God than genealogical order. Notice the progression of trustees traced from Abraham:

These were Abraham’s seven sons. Notice that Ishmael was not considered a trustee:

Abraham - Ishmael - Isaac - Zimran - Jokshan - Medan,
- Midian - Ishbak - Shuah

His Wives:

(Hagar) (Sarah) (Keturah)

Notice again that the trusteeship was not passed to Isaac's firstborn son:

Isaac - Esau - Jacob

Notice again, the trusteeship skipped over Reuben, Simeon, and Levi and passed down to Judah:

Jacob - Reuben - Simeon - Levi - Judah

Notice again, the trusteeship was not passed to Er, the firstborn of Judah, for God killed Er.

Judah - Er

Even a casual study of Bible history reveals the degenerating consequences of sin. In a sin filled world, it is unnatural to have faith in God. Beginning with Abraham and Sarah, we read how they became weary of waiting on God for a son. They took matters into their own hands and Ishmael was the result. Esau was Isaac's firstborn, but Jacob tried to steal the birthright through deceit only to discover that God would not accept his treachery. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn son, was emotionally unstable and he did not conduct himself in a way worthy of the sacred trust granted to the firstborn. Jacob denied him the birthright for his sexual promiscuity.^[14] Jacob also denied the privileges of birthright to his next sons, Simeon and Levi, because of their violence and cruelty. So, Jacob gave paternal rights and the sacred trust to his fourth born son, Judah. In the next generation, God killed Judah's firstborn, Er, for his wickedness.^[15] From that time, God's efforts to have Abraham's family deliver the plan of redemption to the inhabitants of Earth fell apart.

When trustees fail to discharge the terms of the trust set by the grantor, the beneficiaries cannot receive the assets or gifts the grantor wants them to have. As a consequence of their delinquency, God sent Abraham's family into Egypt. It is ironic that Joseph, a faithful "grandson of Abraham," was the one who set the stage for his family to become slaves.^[16] Because of faithless living, God permitted Abraham's family to become slaves of Pharaoh and they lost the exalted opportunity to serve as trustees of the gospel for the next 400 years.

3. God Starts Over – Calls Moses

One day at a burning bush in the Arabian desert, God called Moses to be a trustee of the gospel.^[17] Moses was neither the firstborn of his family nor was he a member of the tribe of Judah. At this time, lineage no longer mattered because God was starting over. Adam and the patriarchs had failed. Abraham and his immediate descendants had failed. However, God, in

keeping with His promises to Abraham, started over with a distant descendant of Abraham. He needed a man to deliver the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage so that He could start over. So, Moses, the murderer turned shepherd, became a trustee of the eternal gospel.

At Mount Sinai God offered the nation of Israel the opportunity to become trustees of the plan of redemption and they accepted.^[18] Meanwhile, the population of the world had multiplied significantly since the flood. Many tribal nations were scattered around Earth, and most of them did not know about the God of Heaven, nor His amazing gospel. So, working through His newly appointed trustees, Moses and his brother, Aaron, God set out again to make Abraham's descendants a family of trustees.

At Mount Sinai, God also promoted the tribe of Levi above the tribes to be a group of special trustees for His family of trustees. After a few centuries, however, it became impossible to tell who was leading who. The Levites were no different than members of the other tribes. They did the same evil things in the sight of the Lord. Time after time, God sent prophets to the kings and priests of Israel to remind the nation the conditions required for God's blessings, but the Israelites hated the prophets and killed most of them. Century after century, the prophets chastised and rebuked the Israelites for their rebellion. In 605 B.C., God sent the whole nation to Babylon as captives for their rebellion, but the captivity did not produce repentance. The story of Israel ends on a sad note. God tried everything possible for 1,470 years (thirty Jubilee cycles), but His trustees did not measure up to the terms and conditions of being trustees of His gospel. Finally, God sent the Roman army against Jerusalem and completely destroyed the nation. All this happened just as He had warned from the very beginning.^[19]

4. God Starts Over Again

After Jesus was on Earth, He concluded that Israel was beyond redemption, so He created a new covenant with a new group of trustees. Jesus chose men who already knew God's ways and character. This allowed the gospel of Jesus to spread rapidly throughout the world. He chose twelve men who, when the time was right, would step out of Judaism and become known as Christians. It is amazing, given the failure of previous trustees, that all but one of the original twelve disciples lived up to His calling!

The trusteeship Jesus gave to Christians does not have any qualifications except faith in Christ. Biological lineage, paternal rights, race, and culture are all meaningless. Remember, the ultimate purpose of a living trust is to benefit the beneficiaries. Therefore, God opened the floodgates after the cross and anyone who wants to be a trustee of His gospel can do so. There are many titles describing this new arrangement, but Christians generally call it "the priesthood of the believer." In effect, it means that any person, male or female, Jew or Gentile, can now serve as a trustee of the gospel.^[20]

Remember, the duty of a trustee is to carry out the wishes of the grantor. God still wants the world to hear and witness the power of His gospel. God wants the world to know about His efforts to save mankind from the penalty for sin. God wants everyone in the world to know that victory over sin is possible. God wants the world to know that lasting joy, happiness, and peace will come if men and women obey His laws and commands. God wants His trustees to be living

examples of His gospel because “seeing is believing.”

The history of the Christian Church is not wholesome or glorious. About 500 years after Jesus returned to Heaven, the Christian Church morphed from “the persecuted” into “the persecutor of the saints.” Corporately speaking, the Christian Church repeated the rebellious history of the Jewish nation. Christian leaders became focused on power and wealth. They forgot God and they hated those who loved His gospel. During the Dark Ages, the church destroyed many people who firmly stood for God’s truth. Sin consistently ruins God’s trustees, because the carnal nature is hostile toward the eternal gospel. The carnal nature is self-seeking and self-important. Bible history confirms that God’s trustees always fail because mankind is cursed with the carnal nature. When the carnal nature rules, there is an irresistible temptation to redirect the assets that belong to the grantor’s beneficiaries to self. It is naturally easier to keep (hoard) wealth than to give it away, remaining a humble conduit through which wealth might flow.

5. God Starts over Again

The iron grip of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe was finally broken in 1798, and the resulting freedom allowed a new group of people to take the gospel commission seriously. Just as Christianity rose out of the cradle of Judaism, Protestantism arose from the soil of Catholicism. Once again, God renewed and extended the privilege of trusteeship to anyone willing to proclaim and demonstrate His eternal gospel. Keep in mind that the basic trust remains intact. The Grantor (God) wants everyone in the world (the beneficiaries) to benefit from His eternal gospel. To do this, the Grantor continues to search for faithful trustees who will accomplish the terms and conditions of His trust.

Unfortunately, Protestantism has also floundered and become derelict in fulfilling its God given duties. Protestantism has lost its vision and her purpose. It has grown indifferent to the eternal gospel because of materialism and humanism. Prosperity has robbed Protestantism of its momentum. The spiritual awakening that propelled 18th century Protestantism is dead. Many people still claim they are protestors, but few Protestants remember the protest.

6. God Starts Over Again

Just in case you have forgotten, a living trust is an arrangement whereby a grantor transfers something of value to His beneficiaries using the services of a trustee. We are now living 2,000 years after Jesus lived on Earth, and Catholics and Protestants combined represent only 25% of the world’s population. The world now has more people living on it than at any other time in its history. As a percentage of people on Earth, it would be fair to say that very few people within this 25% actually know and understand the terms and conditions contained in the eternal gospel.

The seven trumpets of Revelation will sound very soon and the whole world will discover God’s great displeasure with mankind. Jesus will select and empower a new group of 144,000 people as trustees of the eternal gospel before the Great Tribulation begins. These faithful men and women will come from all nations, languages, and religions. Jesus will give the 144,000 an

understanding of the eternal gospel and He will empower them with Holy Spirit power so they can tell the world about redemption. This group of 144,000 people will accomplish in 1,260 days all that God desires. The 144,000 will confront each person in the world with the eternal, unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ and every person will have to make a decision for or against it. The 144,000 will not fail. They will accomplish all that the Lord wants done.

7. God's Final Trustees Will Live Forever

This study on God's trustees does not end with the Second Coming. The people who are redeemed will serve as trustees of the eternal gospel throughout eternity. They will serve God as priests and kings. Because the redeemed have shown themselves to be faithful and obedient to the King of kings, He will greatly honor them in the ages to come just as they honored Him on Earth. It is interesting that the redeemed are the seventh and final group of trustees. As the number seven signifies a full and complete number, so the redeemed will testify of God's endless love forever.

Seven Groups of Trustees

1. The patriarchs
2. The lineage of Abraham
3. The nation of Israel
4. The Christian church
5. The Protestant movement
6. The 144,000
7. The redeemed of all ages

Summary

When sin began, God implemented the plan of redemption as a living trust. God determined that "enlightened brothers" should humbly labor for their "brothers in darkness." God also determined that His trustees should be living examples of living by faith, displaying His love and grace. The foundations of the eternal gospel never change although expressions of faith do change. In other words, there is no other way to please an infinite God than through faithful obedience. Through the ages, God's trustees have proven to be a failure. This is why the final trustees of the eternal gospel will be sealed (carnal nature removed) before they begin their work. This will enable the 144,000 to accomplish all that God wants. Hopefully, this study illuminates the fact that God's trustees are only that – trustees. They are not the Grantor of redemption. In fact, trustees cannot save anyone and they cannot condemn anyone. This is God's work. The only thing that God's trustees have to offer is enlightenment. Through word and action, their lives will reflect the light of the eternal gospel. Because salvation does not come through a church or a tribe, a numberless throng of saints will sing together on Heaven's shore: ". . . **Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.**"^[21]

Part II

Now that we have considered the concept of a living trust, we can examine another important topic. Many Christians do not realize the necessity or importance of being counted an heir of Abraham. They read this verse, **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed [Greek: sperma], and heirs according to the promise”**,^[22] without understanding the profound importance of the verse. Here is the problem: Long ago God promised to give the world to Abraham and his descendants. If Christians are not counted as heirs of Abraham, then Christians will have no place to spend eternity.

We will examine this interesting topic in just a moment. For now, please consider this. When two people get married, it is said that six people are involved.

1. There is the guy he thinks he is.
2. There is the guy she thinks he is.
3. There is the guy he really is.
4. There is the girl he thinks she is.
5. There is the girl she thinks she is.
6. There is the girl she really is.

Normally, after two years of marriage, only two of the original six people remain alive: The guy he really is and the girl she really is. The death of four people is announced one solemn day when one spouse says to the other, “You have changed! You are not the person I married!” I have used this marriage illustration to demonstrate that two spouses can *appear* to be six different people. Similarly, two groups of people, sheep and goats, can be described as twelve different types of people in God’s sight! With this thought in mind, please consider the following definitions and notice the name of the variable that identifies each group because these variables will be used throughout this study:

1. Jews

J1 = A Jew (an individual who descended from Abraham, loves God, lives by faith - a saint)

J2 = A Jew (an nonreligious individual who has Jewish parents, heritage or culture)

J3 = A Jew (a religious zealot who is an ignorant, arrogant, unloving, hardheaded individual whose God is his religious opinion)

J4 = Israel (corporately speaking, all Jews)

2. Christians

C1 = A Christian (a born again Jew or Gentile who loves Jesus, lives by faith - a saint)

C2 = A Christian (a nonreligious individual who has no interest in God but has Christian parents, heritage, or culture)

C3 = A Christian (a religious zealot who is an ignorant, arrogant, unloving, hardheaded

individual whose God is his religious opinion)

C4 = Christians (corporately speaking, all Christians)

3. Gentiles

G1 = A Gentile (an individual like Cornelius whose knowledge of the truth about God is nonexistent or limited, but for all he knows, loves God and walks obediently with God according to the Holy Spirit who guides him – he lives up to all that he knows to be right and true - a saint)

G2 = A Gentile (a non-religious individual who has no interest in God)

G3 = A Gentile (a religious zealot who is neither Christian or Jew, who is ignorant, arrogant, unloving, a hardheaded individual whose God is his religious opinion)

G4 = Gentiles (corporately speaking, all who are not Jews and Christians)

God Looks on the Heart

Many Christians inherently understand these twelve definitions without giving them much thought. For example, when you hear someone say, “I believe there are sheep and goats in every religious body,” that person is affirming that he believes that God *primarily* looks upon the heart and what matters most to God is honesty, integrity, fidelity, love, and faithfulness.

We need to examine these twelve definitions because there is a great deal of confusion about the end time role of modern Israel. To be frank, I do not find anything in Scripture concerning an end time role for modern Israel. There is an Israel of God during the end time, but it is not the modern nation of Israel. We will learn in the following study that the end time Israel of God consists of

J1 + C1 + G1. This explains why the twelve definitions of sheep and goats are important. The words “Christian,” “Jew,” and “Gentile” are used throughout Scripture. Knowing which definition is appropriate within a given text is highly important and if you want to reach the intended meaning of Scripture.

Example 1: Selections from Romans 9 and Romans 2

Paul wrote, **“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel, [J4].** [In other words, I would forfeit eternal life if it would mean that my people would receive Christ and be saved. Look at the gifts that God has generously bestowed on J4:] **Theirs is the [promised] adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory [the Shekinah glory that dwelt within the Most Holy place], the covenants [the offer of serving as trustees of the eternal gospel], the receiving of the law [at Mount Sinai], the temple worship [with its ceremonial shadows], and the promises [of earthly recognition spoken through the prophets].** **Theirs are the patriarchs [Abraham, Moses and David], and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.**

[There is no question that J4 has been blessed above all nations, therefore J4's rejection of Christ is devastating.] **It is not as though God's word** [His promises] **had failed** [because all Israel [J1] will be saved. However, we must consider the problem that J4's rebellion has created for the eternal gospel and God's solution to this problem. First, remember that] **For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.** [That is, J2 and J3 are not counted as sons of Jacob.] **Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children.** [God used Abraham's first born son to demonstrate this point. God declared that Ishmael was unacceptable in His sight as Abraham's heir even though he was Abraham's first born son. God rejected Abraham's request that Ishmael be counted as his heir and inheritor of God's promise, but God said:] **On the contrary, 'It is through Isaac** [the child that came when it was humanly impossible to conceive, the child that came through patience and enduring faith] **that your offspring** [J1] **will be reckoned.'** **In other words, it is not the natural** [born] **children who are counted as God's children, but it is the children of the promise** [that is, people who believe God's promises and wait upon the Lord as Abraham did] **who are regarded as Abraham's offspring** [heirs]."^[23]

God rejected Ishmael as Abraham's firstborn because Ishmael came as a result of abandoning faith in God. From the beginning, God wanted the impossible birth of Isaac to parallel the impossible birth of Christ. Contrary to what some people claim, God did not reject Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael, because the child was born out of wedlock. If this were the case, there would not be twelve tribes in Israel. The twelve tribes of Israel came through two marriages and two slave women. Jacob's first wife, Leah, produced six sons and his second wife, Rachel, produced two sons. Bilhah, Leah's slave woman, produced two sons from Jacob and Zilpah, Rachel's slave woman, also produced two sons for him.^[24]

In Romans 2, Paul confronts some Jews [J3's] who were causing trouble among early Christians in Rome. These Jews [J3] were trying to merge Christianity into Judaism. Paul wrote: **"Now you, if you call yourself a Jew** [that is, if you consider yourself the elect of God]; **if you rely on the law** [to demonstrate that you are righteous] **and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those** [G4's] **who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth – you, then, who teach others, [why] do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, [so why] do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, [so why] do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, [so why] do you rob temples** [and take their gold and silver]? **You who brag about** [obeying] **the law, [so why] do you dishonor God by breaking the law?** [You well know that Israel [J4] has a terrible reputation among the Gentiles as an arrogant and rebellious people. Israel has a long history of being hated and scorned by its neighbors because of the way it exalts itself as the elect of God and yet, treats the Gentiles as though they were less than dogs. As a people [J4], the Old Testament constantly condemns them.] **As it is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'**

[Let us reason together for a moment.] **Circumcision has value if you** [believe that obedience will produce salvation. You conscientiously] **observe the law, but** [you should know that] **if you break the law** [just once], **you have become as though you had not been circumcised**

[because the penalty for one sin is death and how can you recover from the penalty of sin after committing one sin? Circumcision will not save you from death!]. **If those who are not circumcised** [and uninformed like Cornelius - G1] **keep the law's requirements** [out of a deep desire to walk with God], **will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised** [by God]? **The one who is not circumcised physically** [and knows nothing about the written code] **and yet obeys the** [intent of the] **law** [which is love, because love is written in his heart through the Spirit, he] **will condemn you who, even though you** [are a Jew, J4, and] **have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.**

[Be assured. God reads the heart and in His sight] **A man is not a Jew** [J1] **if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew** [J1] **if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.**"^[25]

[Consider God's treatment of sincere Gentiles [G1] who know nothing about Him.] **"Indeed, when Gentiles** [G1], **who do not have** [any knowledge of] **the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have** [knowledge of] **the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts,** [even in the absence of the written code, they [G1] know through the Holy Spirit what is right from wrong because] **their consciences** [influenced by the Holy Spirit] **also bearing witness** [in matters of right and wrong], **and their thoughts now accusing** [that is, their thoughts producing guilt when they violate the Spirit within them], **now even defending them** [that is, their thoughts producing peace when doing what is right according to the Holy Spirit]." ^[26]

Example 2: Ephesians 2 and Galatians 3

"For we [all mankind, C4 + J4 + G4] **are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth** [G4] **and called** [the ignorant and] **'uncircumcised'** [dogs] **by those who call themselves** [the enlightened and] **'the circumcision'** [J3] – **(those who insist that you must also be circumcised by the hands of men) – remember that at that time** [prior to hearing the gospel of Christ that] **you were separate from Christ,** [and as pagans [G4] you were] **excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.**

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace [He is our means to reconciliation because He], **who has made the two** [groups – J1 and G1 into] **one** [church body - C1] **and has destroyed the** [religious] **barrier** [that kept us apart], **the dividing wall of hostility** [religious antagonism], **by abolishing in his flesh the** [Levitical] **law with its commandments and regulations.** [When God abolished the Levitical system, God destroyed Judaism [J4] As a race of people we no longer have a valid religious system that uniquely separates us from the Gentiles. [G4] Our religious system, delivered by Moses, has been made void.] **God's purpose** [in doing this] **was to create in himself one new man** [C1] **out of the two** [groups of people – Jews, J1 and Gentiles, G1], **thus making peace** [between us], **and in this one body**

[of believers, that is, the church - C1] **to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He [Jesus] came and preached peace [reconciliation with God through faith] to you who were far away [G4] and peace [reconciliation with God through faith] to those [of us] who were near [J4]. For through him we [J1 + G1] both have [equal] access to the Father by one Spirit.**

Consequently, you [born again Gentiles - G1's] are no longer foreigners and aliens, but [now you are] fellow citizens with God's people [J1's] and members of God's [unified] household [C1], built on the foundation of the apostles and [Old Testament] prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building [the church - C1] is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."^[27]

[God planned from the beginning to justify the Gentiles through faith.] **"Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'** [The Scripture says that God's righteousness 'was credited to him,' because the righteousness credited to Abraham did not exist when Abraham was alive. The righteousness of Christ was produced when Jesus lived on Earth. He overcame every temptation and His righteousness is imputed to every person who lives by faith. This is why the righteousness of Christ was credited to Abraham.] **Understand, then, that those who believe [as Abraham believed] are children of Abraham [and this now includes Gentile believers]. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'** So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. **All who rely on observing the law [to achieve righteousness] are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'** Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, [all have sinned] and' **'The righteous will live by faith.'**"^[28]

Four Facts

The two passages above illuminate four topics that should become clearer as this study unfolds:

1. From God's perspective, there are three different kinds of Jews (J1 + J2 + J3). Paul says that some Jews are considered the offspring of Abraham (J1) and the others (J2 + J3) are not.
2. From God's perspective, there are three different kinds of Gentiles (G1 + G2 + G3). Paul says that even though G1's may know nothing about the true God, they are considered His children because they honestly live up to all they know to be right and true. Living by faith means doing what is thought to be pleasing to God and leaving the consequences with Him.
3. When Jesus came to Earth, He abolished the Levitical code^[29] which terminated Judaism. He established a new covenant and appointed new trustees. Speaking to Jewish and Gentile believers, Paul made clear that it was Christ's purpose to unite J1 and G1 to create C1. Of course, as time progressed, C1 fractured into corporate Christianity (C4) which has nothing to do with living by faith.
4. God views the sheep and goats as twelve distinct groups of people.

Abraham's Inheritance

Now, we come to an interesting question that confuses millions of Christians. Why is it important to God that Christians (C1) be counted as heirs of Abraham today? The answer to this question is that God made three unilateral (one sided) promises to Abraham. A unilateral promise is a standalone promise, whereas a bilateral promise has two sides. Marriage is a bilateral promise when two people promise to love, honor, and cherish one another for as long as they live. If one party in the marriage fails to keep the vow, the covenant is broken and it becomes void. Conversely, nothing is required of a person when a unilateral promise is given to him. For example, God promised all mankind that He would never destroy the world with a flood again.^[30] This is a unilateral promise. Mankind is not required to do anything for the promise to be fulfilled.

Now you can appreciate the three unilateral promises which God made to Abraham:

1. "He [God] took him [Abraham] outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"^[31]
2. "The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."^[32]
3. God said, "**Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on Earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.**"^[33]

Of course, God knew that Abraham *would not live long enough* to see these promises fulfilled,^[34] but God's view of the future is not limited. God foreknew that He would resurrect Abraham someday and at the appointed time, these three promises would be fulfilled. Abraham also realized that he would not live long enough to see the promises fulfilled and this is why he looked forward to a city whose Builder and Maker is God.^[35]

If a majority in Israel (J4) had been faithful to God's covenant, Plan A would have been fulfilled and the promises God gave to Abraham would have been fulfilled long ago. But Israel (J4) fractured and J1 and became a minority. Corporately speaking, Israel became unfaithful and God implemented Plan B. Christianity has mirrored Israel's footsteps. Corporately speaking, Christianity is unfaithful; therefore, God will raise up 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel (J1 + C1 + G1)!

God will fulfill the unilateral promises He made to Abraham. God will fulfill them on a scale that is larger and more glorious than Plan A could have ever been! (With God, Plan B is always larger and better!) Consider how God fulfilled each promise to Abraham under Plan B.

Unilateral Promises Fulfilled

1. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and his offspring would be as numerous as the stars. At the end of the 1,000 years, the faith-full saints (children of Abraham = J1 + G1 + C1) will be as numberless as the stars! How many nations down through history will be represented? Hundreds, if not thousands!
2. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham. If a majority in Israel had been faithful (J1), Plan A would have been fulfilled. Jesus would have established the kingdom of God on Earth after His death and over time, the whole land of Canaan would have become "the land promised to Abraham." Since Israel became rebellious [J4] and unfaithful, God had to implement Plan B. At the end of sin's drama, "the promised land" will fill "the whole Earth." Jesus will create a new Heaven and a new Earth. The holy city, New Jerusalem (whose Builder and Maker is God) will descend. God will move His throne to Earth and He will dwell here with Abraham and his descendants [J1 + G1 + C1] forever!
3. Finally, God promised Abraham that all nations on Earth would be blessed through him. In the Earth made new, the people who were saved will see the fulfillment of this promise. The saints will see a barren man with more descendants than he can count. The saints will see a barren man who received a son by faith. Through this son, Jesus came and through Jesus, all nations have been blessed (J1 + G1 + C1). Throughout the endless ages of eternity, the nations will rejoice to see and worship Jesus. The saints will cast their crowns before Him and marvel at His amazing love for sinners. They will never tire of singing, "Salvation belongs to the Lamb who came to Earth through the seed of Abraham and redeemed us with His blood!"

When these three promises are fulfilled, I am sure Abraham will weep for joy as he worships at Jesus' feet. Abraham looked for a city whose Builder and Maker is God, but he never dreamed the city would be 1,420 miles cubed with walls 216 feet thick. He never dreamed the world would someday become "the promised land!"

I hope the importance of being an heir of Abraham makes sense. If a person is not counted as an heir of Abraham [J1 or G1 or C1], he has no future and no place to live!

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