

Abraham and Sarah and the blessings promised to them. For example, anyone who is not a descendant of Abraham but receives the Holy Ghost becomes the SEED OF ABRAHAM (*TPJS*, pp. 149–50; Abr. 2:10; cf. Gal. 3:29), while each man magnifying the Melchizedek Priesthood likewise becomes Abraham’s seed (D&C 84:33–34). And each couple married eternally in the temple is promised the blessings of Abraham—posterity as the stars of heaven and sand of the seashore, meaning an eternal increase of posterity in the CELESTIAL KINGDOM (D&C 132:30; *JD* 11:151–52; 15:320).

Such blessings of innumerable posterity were promised to Abraham on several occasions (Abr. 3:13–14; Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 17:2, 6), but it was not until he demonstrated his willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice that the Lord guaranteed the promises (Gen. 22:16–18), showing, explains Joseph Smith, that any person who would attain ETERNAL LIFE “must sacrifice all things” (*TPJS*, p. 322). Accordingly, the Lord’s people must be “tried, even as Abraham,” to become sanctified through Abraham’s descendant Christ (D&C 101:4–5; Moro. 10:33) in preparation to “sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham” and Sarah (Alma 5:24) on thrones of glory to inherit the same blessings of EXALTATION already enjoyed by that exemplary couple (D&C 132:34–37; cf. *Testament of Isaac* 2:5–7).

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ABRAHAM, GOSPEL OF

See: Gospel of Abraham

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The divine archetypal covenant, of which Abraham’s covenant is an example, is the everlasting covenant of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. By accepting the gospel, humankind can be redeemed

from the doom of death and the blight of sin to enjoy ETERNAL LIFE with God.

Abraham’s mission was not new; it was like the mission of Adam, Enoch, and Noah. The same divine power—or PRIESTHOOD—that gave them authority to promulgate the covenant of divine redemption for God’s children in their time was renewed with Abraham and his seed; it was explicitly to be perpetuated by him and his literal and spiritual heirs for all time (Gen. 12:1–3; Abr. 1:18–19; 2:6, 9–11).

ABRAHAM’S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COVENANT MISSION From the records of his forefathers, Abraham learned of the true and living God and the saving priesthood powers. Although his immediate ancestors had fallen away from the gospel, he desired and received that true priesthood from Melchizedek, with its powers and responsibilities (Abr. 1:1–7, 18, 19, 31; D&C 84:14; Alma 13:14–19; Gen. 14:18–20).

The idolatrous Chaldeans had rejected Abraham and placed him to be sacrificed on an altar (Abr. 1:5–12); but the Lord rescued him and directed him to leave his home in Ur for a new land of promise (Gen. 11:27–32; 12:1–3; Abr. 1:1, 17; 2:1–5). Abraham took other family members with him to a place they named Haran, where he won additional converts to the way of the Lord. With them he departed to undertake his ministry in the land promised to him and to all his descendants who would hearken to the voice of the Lord (Abr. 2:6, 14–20; Gen. 12:4–8).

Abraham and his company settled first in the Bethel area, built an altar, and proclaimed the name of the Lord—a procedure he perpetuated in the homes he established thereafter (Gen. 12:8; 13:4, 18). Near Bethel, the covenant promises and responsibilities were renewed, and CIRCUMCISION was made the token of the covenant, to remind all bearers to keep themselves pure and free from sin (Gen. 17). Abraham became a man of good repute (Gen. 14:13, 18–20; 23:1–16) and was trusted by God, who commended him, saying, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (Gen. 18:19). The ultimate test and a revelation of the meaning of the redemptive covenant came to him in the divine requirement that, in anticipation of the sacrifice of the Savior, he be willing to sacrifice his own birthright son. He passed the test, his son was

saved, and he learned how all may be saved by the divine Redeemer (Gen. 22:1–18; John 8:56; Jacob 4:5; Gal. 3:8).

PERPETUATION OF THE MISSION BY ABRAHAM'S HEIRS Abraham's lineal and spiritual successors learned to keep the covenant by the things they suffered. Their efforts sometimes prospered and their neighbors were impressed (Gen. 17:1–7; 26:1–5, 24–28; 28:13–22; 30:25–27; 32:24–29; 35:1–15; 39:1–6, 21–23; 40:8; 41:9–16, 37–42).

A **PATRIARCHAL BLESSING** given by Abraham's grandson Jacob (Israel) to his twelve sons indicated future covenant roles for his descendants, particularly those through Judah and Joseph (Gen. 49:10, 22–26).

In addition to Jacob's progeny, Abraham had descendants through Ishmael, the son of Hagar—Sarah's handmaiden. Of Ishmael's family, “twelve princes” are named who established “towns” and “nations” (Gen. 25:12–16). Six sons by Abraham's wife Keturah are also named among his families: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (Gen. 25:2). To all these, he promised gifts before his death (Gen. 25:1–7), including spiritual gifts. One descendant, Jethro (or Reuel), priest of Midian, provided Moses with a wife, ordained him to the priesthood, and advised him in organizing, governing, and judging Israel (Ex. 2:16–22; 18:12–27; D&C 84:6–16). Scores of descendants of Esau, with their tribal leaders and kings, are also named (Gen. 36).

Today, millions claim Abraham as their father. All may have his covenant privileges if they will but do the works of Abraham. The Lord never told Abraham that he alone would be blessed by the covenant or that it would bless only his birthright seed; the charge was that in him and his seed all families of all nations should be blessed. All who accept the covenant of the divine Redeemer become Abraham's seed spiritually and receive the same blessings as his biological descendants (Gen. 12:1–3; Abr. 2:8–11; Gal. 3:7–9, 26–29; cf. John 8:33, 37, 39; Rom. 9:6–8).

THE ABRAHAMIC HERITAGE THROUGH MOSES AND THE PROPHETS The mission of Moses was to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of slavery and death in Egypt and return them to the promised land. They were to enter the land only after the iniquity of the prior inhabitants had become so excessive that they were no longer worthy to retain it (1 Ne. 17:35; Gen. 15:13–16; 17:7–9; JST Gen. 17:4–7; Ex. 4:22–23; 6:1–8). Through

Moses, the Lord gave the Israelites laws, ordinances, statutes, and commandments to help them remember their duties to God and to make them a kingdom of priests, a holy people, and a peculiar treasure as God's exemplary servants (Ex. 19:1–6, 20ff; Deut. 4:1–6; Mosiah 13:27–30).

Israel did well in living according to the covenant in the last days of Moses and in the time of his successor, Joshua; but in the days of the judges and beyond, the Israelites lapsed into the ways of neighboring nations instead of following the moral and religious laws of the true God (Judg. 2:7–13; 17:6; 21:25). Because cycles of apostasy were repeated throughout Israel's history, the Israelites were periodically castigated by the prophets for their sins and called to repentance (e.g., Isa. 1:1–4; Hosea 4:1–6; Amos 3; Micah 3; Jer. 2; Ezek. 2).

Two themes dominate the messages of the Old Testament prophets: (1) the promised Redeemer would come, and though he would suffer rejection by many, he would establish the promised way of salvation for all; (2) in the last days the covenant of Abraham would be reestablished (Isa. 2:2–5, 11; 7:14–16; 9:1–7; 52:13–15, 53; Jer. 23:5–8; Ezek. 37:11–28; Dan. 9:21–27; Micah 5:2–5; Zech. 9:9–11; 11:10–13; 13:6; 14:4–9).

FULFILLMENT AND PERPETUATION The Redeemer did come, and the laws and prophecies prepared the faithful to receive him (Gal. 3:16–24, 25–29; Acts 2:47; 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:6). He accomplished his mission of personal teaching and sacrifice on earth and then commissioned the new Christian heirs of the covenant to make it known unto all the world (Matt. 24:14; 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16). However, over a period of centuries, the priesthood power to administer the proper ordinances of the covenant and some vital facets of doctrine were lost. All these have now been restored in the latter-day dispensation of the gospel (D&C 110:11–16) and are again available to all families and nations of the earth.

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