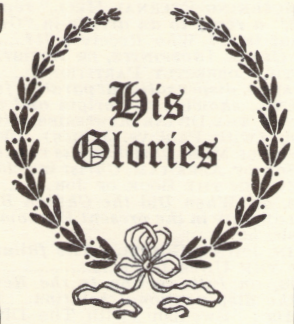
Jehovah the Saviour
The Christ of God
The Lord of All

The Son of Abraham



The Son of Abraham
The Son of David
The Son of God

THE SON OF ABRAHAM

THE title Son of Abraham is burdened with blessing for all the nations of the earth, as well as the title to the land of promise. Only once is our Lord distinguished by this dignity. The opening words of Matthew describe Him as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. In the genealogy which follows David is called "the king." His royal prerogatives are the ruling factor in Matthew's account, yet His secondary title, Son of Abraham is also acknowledged when the centurion's servant (8:5-13) and the daughter of the woman of Canaan (15:22-28) remind us that, through Abraham, *all* the nations of the earth are to be blessed. And it is in recognition of this title that the commission goes forth, at the close of Matthew's account, which includes *all* nations in its scope (28:18-20).

To apprehend the truth conveyed in this blessed title we must retire to a period anterior to the time of David, where the kingdom has its source; we must leave the law to the time of Moses; and, for the most precious part of the truth, we must go back to Abraham even before he instituted the rite of circumcision. The promises were made to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the law was given (Gal. 3:17); and he was accounted just before the sign of circumcision set its seal upon his flesh (Ro. 4:10). Consequently it is possible, in Christ, to be of Abraham's seed, even though uncircumcised and unsubjected to the law (Gal. 3:6-29).

THE STARS, THE SAND, AND THE SOIL

Abram was charged to get out of his country, and from

his kindred and from his father's house (Gen. 12:1). But, when he left Haran, Lot went with him, contrary to the command. Faith fails further when he goes down into Egypt to escape the famine. At his return trouble begins to brew because he had not left his kindred. Faith asserts itself and he gives Lot the choice of the land. Thereupon Jehovah assures him that the land is his and his seed's for the eon and that his seed shall be as the "dust of the earth", or, rather, the soil of the land.

Lot may choose the richest for himself, but God will see that it is sure to Abraham's seed and thus reward the magnanimity of His friend. This promise is repeated to Jacob (Gen. 28:14); and Balaam, seeking to curse Israel, is constrained to bless them with the exclamation, "Who can count the dust of Jacob?" (Nu. 23:10). Solomon sets his seal to the fulfillment of this promise (2 Chr. 1:9) when he reminds Jehovah that He had made him king over a people "like the soil of the land in multitude."

In all these passages the words "dust of the earth" really refers to the soil of the land of Israel. It is a most apt figure, indeed, for in another and more literal sense the descendants of Jacob *in the land* were that very soil in corporate form. Was not this the thought in the Baptist's mind, when he declared "God is able out of these stones to raise up children to Abraham"? The stones decompose and form soil. The soil is incorporated into the plants which form fodder for cattle. And these, in turn, nourish and sustain the sons of Jacob, who are the seed of Abram. Among those who are included in this class we may count King David, and must not fail to include his greater Son, Who, *as to the flesh,* was David's seed, and Abram's too.

The context and the circumstances which attend this promise seem to limit this figure to that part of Abram's descendants who lived *in the land,* rather than on the whole earth.

Abram's faith, now that he is restored to full commu-

nion with God, ascends still higher. When Lot's selfishness costs him all that he has, including himself, Abram rescues him from the confederate kings. He meets Melchizedek, pays him tithes and learns that his God is possessor of heaven and earth. As a consequence of having so rich a God he refuses to take so much of the spoils as a shoelatchet, lest any one (except God) should say "I have made Abram rich." Then it is that Jehovah speaks to him and rewards him with the words "*I* am thy Shield and thy *exceeding great* Reward." From this sublime peak of faith it is that God shows him what his recompense will be. "Look now towards heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them . . . so shall thy seed be." Only one who has enjoyed the starlit nights of a country like the land of promise can realize the almost infinite number of stars which light the azure vault above from the torchlike Sirius to the filmy veil of the milky way stretching across the heavens. And only one attuned to the exquisite imagery of oriental speech can respond to the high feelings with which it invests the starry host. Scripture is far from silent on this sublime theme. The stars, we read, are made to *rule* the night (Ps. 136:9). Joseph dreamed that the eleven stars made obeisance to him. And, when we find Israel in her royal glory, she is crowned with twelve stars (Rev. 12:1). Is it not clear from this that the star seed are not the ordinary descendants of Abram, such as were figured by the soil, but saints—for the saints shall rule the world (1 Cor. 6:2)—not only the saints in Israel's crown who are of the circumcision, who are born *from above* (Jn. 3:3 not "again"), but *all* the saints; all who, like Abram, believe God and are accounted righteous? That this star seed is not a figure confined to the saints whose destiny is heaven, will be seen when we note how often Israel is thus described (Ex. 32:13; Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62; 1 Ch. 27:23; Neh. 9:23). When Israel is apostate as in the opening chapters of the Apocalypse, Jehovah speaks to them through

messengers who are represented as seven stars (Rev. 1:16, 20, etc.) These suffer during the time of trouble, when the "little horn" casts them to the ground and stamps upon them (Dan. 8:10). And in the resurrection those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for the eons of the eons. (Dan. 12:3).

Outshining all the rest of this starry host is the Son of Abraham, for

> A star treads from Jacob
> And a scepter rises from Israel.
> (Num. 24:17)

He is the one bright particular Star Who will herald the dawn of the day of Jehovah. He is the bright and morning Star whose early beams are the harbingers of a glorious day.

And shall we not read the story of the wise men in this light? It is told in the very book which opens with the mention of Abraham's Son. They recognized His star in the east and they knew that the Seed of Abraham, Who had been promised so long ago, was about to come and rule as was His right.

The promise of the star seed was made before the rite of circumcision had been given. It was further enforced by the ratification of the covenant on the part of Jehovah. As was the custom of the time, Abram prepared the covenant victims and was prepared to pass between the portions in token of his agreement to perform his part. But what part had he to perform? Nothing was to be left to him. All was to be left to God's grace. So he is put to sleep and thus the symbols of God's presence pass between the victims in token of God's unconditional and irrevocable determination to fulfill the contract quite apart from Abram's efforts altogether.

That Abram did not fully appreciate this is seen when he lends a hand and genders the unpromised, unrecognized son of the slave girl. Ishmael, however, at Abraham's sore

request, is granted a measure of blessing. He is to become a great nation. But in Isaac, not Ishmael, must his seed be called. Isaac is not the fruit of the flesh. He is the first of the star seed. After Abraham had offered him upon the altar and had received him back in symbolic resurrection, the promise of the seed is renewed. His seed was to be as the stars of heaven, with the significant addition "and as the sand which is upon the seashore." Is not this a recognition of his purely physical progeny by Ishmael and his other children? All of these were circumcised in their flesh, so that all of the circumcised nations who sprang from Abraham are the fulfillment of this promise. That those who believe are not in view seems clear when we note the contrast between Jacob and Israel.

Jacob, the supplanter, will be multiplied as the sand of the sea (Gen. 32:12) but Israel, the man of faith, shall be multiplied as the stars of heaven (Ex. 32:13). Significant it is that this phrase is applied to Israel's *enemies.* The confederacy of Jabin, King of Hazor, was "even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude" (Josh. 11:4). The Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel "as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude" (1 Sa. 13:5). Hushai counselled Absalom, when he revolted, to gather all Israel "as the sand that is by the sea for multitude" in order to fight King David. The stars would never join his treacherous host but would cleave to Jehovah's anointed. Israel's last enemies, after the thousand years, are described by this figure. The number of Gog and Magog is "as the sand of the sea" (Rev. 20:8). Perhaps this is the key to the position of the serpent as he (not John) stands upon the sands of the sea (Rev. 13:1).

Our Lord uses this figure to describe the nation of Israel in His day. They were building on sand. They were depending on the physical descent from Abraham. They boasted "We have Abraham for our father!" Yet all the while they were seeking to kill the true Son of Abraham!

They depended on the law, which, like the seed of Abraham by Hagar, gendered to bondage. Hagar was a slave girl and Ishmael was born into slavery. So are all the rest of Abraham's seed who are bound under law and do not know the liberty which comes through the Son of Abraham's faith.

That the sands do not suggest the saints is certain when we consider Isaiah's cry concerning the nation: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sands of the sea" only "a remnant shall be saved" (Ro. 9:27).

When we remember that the divine figure for the nations is the sea and Israel the solid soil, the figure of the sea shore sand is seen to represent the physical seed of Abraham. It is an intermediate, half way place, always subject to the surging of the sea, unstable and unfruitful. Thus was Israel as a nation. Only a remnant amongst them rose to the dignity of believing God and becoming spiritual sons of Abraham. And those of this remnant were, usually, the poor, the despised, the outcast. Perhaps the most degraded of all, in the popular mind, were the tax gatherers, who farmed the taxes for the Romans.

"Let him be unto thee as a heathen man (one of the nations) and a publican (tax collector)" shows how low this class had fallen in the estimate of the people. The publicans were deemed no better than aliens. Matthew was one of these. Zaccheus was a chief tax collector, and therefore most unpopular. His low stature figures this. His position in the wild fig tree (sycomore) shows his elevation at the hands of Israel's oppressor, Rome. Israel was the true fig tree. Rome was the unpalatable, wild variety.

But in spite of Zaccheus' physical and social lack, he had the one thing needful. He had faith. This constituted him a true son of Abraham. Indeed he is the only one who is specifically named as such. What a contrast between this ostracized traitor of Jericho and the great priest in the temple at Jerusalem! Yet their spiritual distance is still greater, for the priest is a son of Satan, the publican a son of Abraham.

Lazarus and the rich man (Lu. 16) afford another notable contrast between the seed of Abraham by faith and that of his flesh. Both Lazarus and the rich man are acknowledged by Abraham, yet they are accorded places quite the opposite in death. Taking this death in the figurative sense which we ascribe to the prodigal in this very connection (Lu. 15:24) and interpreting the double death dealing with the national demise of Israel, we find that now, during Israel's defection there are two classes. One, represented by the rich man, is the nation at large, suffering in the flame of persecution, which has followed them in all their weary wanderings. But a few—a remnant the apostle calls them—believe God and find refuge in Abraham's bosom. The comfort they enjoy is that of faith. These are the ones to whom the epistle to the Hebrews was written. While the kingdom is deferred, they, like the faithful of old, die in faith, not receiving the promises. They rest in Abraham's bosom.

Returning to the original promise to Abraham that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, we read the important addition: "And he believed in Jehovah; and He counted it to him for righteousness."

Abraham believed God. That was all he did. So, today, he who believes God may enjoy the same blessing that came to Abraham. But it is well to note that belief was not a constant trait of Abraham. Peer though he is of all the faithful except One, he failed (as all do) in his strongest point. Not so his greater Son.

Abram fled into Egypt to escape the famine, but Christ refused to make bread out of the stones to satisfy a fast of forty days (Mt. 4:3, 4). Abraham tempted God in the case of Hagar, but Christ refused to cast Himself down, saying "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Abraham failed again at Gerar, but His Seed would not worship aught but God, in spite of a much greater temptation. Abraham's faith was great but his Son's faith was far greater.

The translators of our versions did not believe in Christ's faith, judging by the way they manipulated the passages which point it out. His pre-eminence in this regard is the special burden of the twelfth of Hebrews. There He is called the marshall, or chief leader, of faith. The grand array of the faithful of the past are headed by His example. But none of them were perfect or mature in faith. Not so He. Faith finds in Him its only perfect Specimen.

The aptness of His example is lost in our translations. It is not "for" or in view of the joy set before Him that He endured the cross, but *in place* of the joy lying before Him, that He endures impalement, disparaging shame. The word is ANTI, as when we read that Herod ruled *in the stead* of his father (Matt. 2:22). The proclamation of the kingdom was made by Him in all good faith. Had it been accepted the joy of reigning over His people and ruling the whole earth would have been His. *Instead* of this, His faith in God enables Him to endure His rejection and crucifixion. His reward now is that He has sat down at the right hand of God's throne. The joy of earth's throne is His only by faith in God's word.

How helpful this for the Hebrews! They were in much the same position. When the kingdom was again proclaimed, after His ascension, they expected the joy of reigning with Him. But, just as in His case, the kingdom fails to materialize. Instead of the joy they anticipated, they endured much affliction and persecution. Hence He is given them for a Leader, or Marshall. Let them follow His example. He is the One, too, Who is the Maturer of faith. Only by following Him will their faith come to fruition.

The faith of Christ is brought before us in the otherwise enigmatical statement "*from* faith *to* faith." (Rom. 1:17). Literally this is "*out* of faith *into* faith." There are two faiths in view. The latter is our faith; the former is Christ's. Justification is founded on His faith: it is conferred on our faith. Abraham was constituted righteous for his faith:

Christ makes all men righteous because of His faith. Hence we find the statement (which is so often referred to us who believe) "the Just One shall live by His faith." This refers to One only, not many or all, however aptly it may be "applied" to them. He kept alive by His faith, and because of its surpassing perfection, it is the foundation of all other faith.

Just as it was in Abram's case, faith and rightousness are inseparably linked together. Not only that righteousness will be ascribed to us as it was to Abraham when we, too, believe God, but the faith of Jesus Christ is always put as the basis out of which this blessing flows. For those who have not considered this aspect of Christ's work, we commend the earnest study of the following passages:

Ro. 3:22 a righteousness of God, through Jesus Christ's faith, for all and on all who are believing

26 for Him to be just and a Justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus.

Ga. 2:16 having perceived that a man is not justified by works of law, except it be through the faith of Christ Jesus

16 that we may be justified by the faith of Christ

3:22 that the promise [righteousness] out of Jesus Christ's faith may be given to those who are believing

Phil. 3: 9 not having my righteousness, which is of law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God for faith

Note that in each case the blessing is that of being justified and in every instance the faith which He exercised is the ground upon which it is based.

This glory of His as the Marshall and Maturer of Faith has long been eclipsed by unscriptural and gratuitous attempts to gild His glories. But it is our wisdom to abide by what is written, for much which *seems* to dignify His character is but a human caricature when viewed in His light.

10 Abraham's Only Son, Whom He Loved

Abraham had one son, whom he loved. (Gen. 22:2.) So, too, there is One Who alone can claim, in His Own right, to be called the Son of Abraham. He is the Seed in Whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. His faith is the foundation upon which God will finally justify all mankind (Rom. 5:18). Then His blessedness will be more than the man of whom David sings,

> Happy the man to whom the Lord by no means
> Should be reckoning sin!

for He will be the Blesser. A. E. K.

Concordant Publishing Concern
P.O. Box 449
Almont, Michigan 48003