

FATHER KIELHORN

FATHER ABRAHAM

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Father Kielhorn / Father Abraham

We know very little about life and what happens after death, but the little do know tells us how much more reasonable it is to believe that we are here for a plan and a purpose, than that we and the universe are creations with no meaning, with no future, no hope.

As intelligent animals we must believe in a beneficent creator, whose power is beyond ours to resist, and whose wisdom is not ours to dispute. And does not the Christian faith satisfy completely our recognition of these conditions? (Lloyd V. Kielhorn)

In the remarks above, spoken over the casket of his beloved mother, Anna Vineyard Kielhorn, my grandfather reaffirmed his belief in the logic of Christian faith. In choosing this solemn occasion to advance an essentially optimistic view, that we are here for a plan and a purpose, he placed himself squarely on the side of hope, that "a beneficent creator" will transform our situation and for our part, we are to faithfully trust that this is so.

"Plan," what plan? "Purpose," what purpose? Many would dispute the existence of such things. These days it's fashionable to suppose that we are but pawns in the universe. Never mind evidence for intelligent design, never mind the common sense observation that creation needs a creator, many assume that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

Arises the question, beyond mere wish fulfillment, does there exist in the deep structure of the universe a higher force? Experiential faith replies affirmatively. As the psalmist said:

O God, you have taught me since childhood
and I still proclaim your wonders. (Psalm 71)

While I pondered this, it occurred to me that some 60 years before my grandfather had inscribed on the face page of the Kailin family Bible these words:

He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth
the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God. (Micah 6:8)

The emphasis is on doing. Ideology is not faith. Why complicate things? If God calls “good” such qualities as justice, mercy and humility, then let us resolve, with the help of God, to manifest these qualities in our daily lives, even as He expects. If our plan and purpose is that of blessing the world (and shame on us if it isn't), then let us flesh out Micah's broad generalities and clothe them with specific applications. When a professed non-believer does such things, he or she is far closer to God than is the professed believer who does not. Profession is not possession. Good values trump theological speculation.

With these texts and father Kielhorn's words of wisdom behind me, I decided to expand my study to include father Abraham, for, while my grandfather made me a good example, father Abraham, not father Kielhorn, is the father of the faithful, for:

In thee [Abraham] shall all nations be blessed.
(Galatians 3:8, see Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4)

Where it began

The glory of God appeared to our father, Abraham, when he
was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran. (Acts 7:2-3)

Before Abraham, other outstanding individuals had arisen such as Enoch and Noah, but from none of them did a sustained movement emerge, one which continued on from one generation to the next. This changed some 4000 years ago in the land of the Chaldeans when God revealed Himself to Abraham, saying:

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land

that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and
make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee,
and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

(Genesis 12:1-3)

Apparently Abraham didn't just jump up and immediately depart for the Promised Land. Maybe he should have but I find it more likely that he was suppose to first get his affairs in order since no note of hesitation is sounded. In any event, his journey to the Promised Land occurred in two removes. First, he left Ur of the Caldees in Mesopotamia, the land of his nativity, to relocate in Haran, which is to the north in modern day Syria. There Abraham tarried until his father, Terah, died.

Abraham was sent and he went, if not immediately, at least in due course, confident that the the One who makes promises will deliver on them, for:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but
was strong in faith, giving glory to God. (Romans 4:20)

While not obeying God perfectly in all particulars in that Abraham brought with him Lot, his nephew, when he was suppose to go apart from his kith and kin (a mistake having long-term ramifications), at least he made the journey and along the way he learned by his mistakes.

Thus it was, in obedience to the divine command, that Abram headed south, to a sparsely settled land, a place where he could roam freely and find grazing for his sheep. There, in that chosen spot, Abraham was free to think his own thoughts and be his own person.

Although it is true that God is everywhere the same, it so happens that we are not. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that Abraham's prayers in the wilderness, were given fresh impetus by the stark beauty of his bracing surroundings, a landscape of mountains and verdant plains, the sun by day, the constellations of the heavens by night. A cleft in a rock, a mountain spring, a wilderness trek, the experience of nature has an uncanny way of clarifying ones thinking. Then we are humbled and grateful to be alive, an appropriate setting for conducting a vision quest.

If we reflect on it, our most profound moments often have little connection to organized religion but are transcendental, rising out of perceptions of the natural world. Thus it was, for the sake of a shining vision, a kingdom reserved in the heavens to be revealed in due course, that Abraham gave up settled existence for nomadic life, substituting a tent for a permanent abode, for:

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10)

Unlike the great empires of the day, whose religious cults enforced mindless, mass conformity, God's plan was to establish a corporate work of redemption rooted in rugged individualism, where each must take responsibility for his or her personal actions and spiritual condition. In this regard, Abraham did not use liberty for license but kept to God's law. And God blessed Abraham for it, saying:

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. (Genesis 24:5)

The law referred to above could hardly be that which came down from Sinai, for that was yet many centuries hence, rather, he kept to God's natural law which allowed him to live in balance with the natural world, and at peace with his fellow man for, at root, it is natural law which governs what goes on in this world. And God testified of Abraham, saying:

"For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment; that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Genesis 18:19)

As we see above, Abraham was complimented for his orthopraxy, that is, for his right

practice, not for his orthodoxy, right belief. Abraham was not trying to control anyone's thinking, nor does any body of teaching attach to his name; rather he ran a tight ship, a well ordered household, and for that he is to be commended. Perhaps this could help explain why of all men he is most universally revered, whether by Judaism or by Christianity or by Islam, for Abraham was not ideologically driven, nor a sectarian. Having been humbled by a vision of God's splendor, he lived a life of obedience to God.

MARRIAGE

The name of Abram's wife was Sarai. (Genesis 11:29)

We know that holy matrimony is an honorable estate, instituted of God, signifying to us the mystical union which also exists between God and his people; that it should be entered into reverently, and with the greatest sense of awe, wonder and respect.

And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai, . . . (Genesis 16:2)

Abraham was called to monogamy, for that is the way it was in the beginning with Adam and Eve. His harkening to Sari, referred to above, was in regard to Abram having a son by Sarai's handmaid, Hagar. While hearkening to the voice of one's wife is generally a good thing, especially in the context of a patriarchal society where women too often were ignored, in this instance it would have been better if Abram had hearkened not, since it led to disobedience, for both Abram and Sarah, having grown impatient with God for being slow, so they thought, in keeping His promise, decided to help God out a little, when they should have abided patiently.

Monogamy and monotheism go together like a horse and carriage. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one man, one woman, the marriage covenant being comparable to God's Covenant. It is all part and parcel of being made in the image of God, being that which most distinguishes Homo Sapiens from all other apes.

Though very much devoted to Sarai, his wife, nonetheless Abraham was less than perfect in that he ended up with two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, each by a different mother, Hagar and Sari. This led to sorrow and heartbreak when he had to banish his oldest son, Ishmael, and Hagar, his mother, from his presence.

FATHER ABRAHAM

Father Abraham, . . . father of the faithful. (Romans 4:12, 16)

The desire of Abraham's heart was to have a flesh and blood heir. A worthy desire, it was frustrated by the inability of his wife, Sarah, to conceive. What Abraham did not know was the time frame. God had promised him a son but where was he? The window of opportunity seemed to be closing? This was Abraham's complaint:

... what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my
house is this Eliezer of Damascus? Behold to me thou hast given no
seed: and lo, one born in my house is my heir. (Genesis 15:2, 3)

At his wife's behest, Abraham had a child by another women, by Hagar. With great devotion to his first-born son by Hagar, Abraham cried out unto God:

O that Ishmael might live before thee! (Genesis 17:18)

One of the most difficult, tragic days in Abraham's life came the day he sent Ishmael and Hagar away into the wilderness, never to see them again. It happened thus:

Sarah saw the son of Hagar, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore
she said unto Abraham, cast out this bondswoman and her son: for the son of this
bondswoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. (Genesis 21:9-10)

Again Abraham harkened to the voice of his wife:

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water,
and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away;
and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. (Genesis 21:14)

Eventually Abraham saw through to a larger reality relating to the family of man, that potentially we are all God's children. Shot through with God's glory, Abraham grew over time to realize how God's promise was not just to Ishmael or Isaac but "to all nations."

The Land

Beyond the initial covenanting, God reiterated and extended his Covenant with Abraham on at least four different occasions.

And Jehovah appeared unto Abram and said; Unto thy seed will

I give this land: and there builded he an altar to Jehovah. (Genesis 12:2)

Again God covenanted with Abraham, saying:

Lift up now thine eyes, and look from thee place where thou art northward,

and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which to seest,

to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. (Genesis 13:14-15)

Again God covenanted with Abraham, saying:

Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt

unto the great river, the river Euphrates. (Genesis 15:18)

Historically speaking, the true, physical sons of Abraham were never very lucky in the game of empire building. Only briefly, during the reign of King Solomon, did the Kingdom of Judah actually come anywhere near to realizing the promise above. Actually, God's promise regarding the Land was not fulfilled in Abraham's day nor at any time since :

And he [God] gave him [Abraham] none inheritance in it [the Land], no, not

so much as to set foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for

a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. (Acts 7:5)

Meanwhile, said Jesus:

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until

the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24)

That which Jesus said continues to be true today, for currently Gentile interlopers, Asiatic Ashkenazi, ride herd in the Promised Land, while Abraham's real progeny after the flesh, with bit in mouth, trot out at their masters' command and they are as far from realizing the promise of God regarding the Land as they ever were. For them it has been a long, drawn out death rattle.

Yet Abraham did not die a disappointed man, but he was full of faith. And we, too, should be full of faith as the day of redemption draweth nigh.

Tenting with Abraham

... and he [Abraham] sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. (Genesis 18:1)

Typically, at the entry flap to the tent is where the nomadic patriarchs of old held court and from whence they rendered decisions and received visitors from afar.

As was true generally in face-to-face traditional societies, a body of elders arose to administer justice. There was no election; rather, there was internal selection based on mutual recognition.

In thee [Abraham] shall all *families* of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:3)

A family man, Abraham's religion is a family religion. Wherever he went and set up his tent, there he set up an altar to God, a family altar.

So Abram departed, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him;

and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brothers son, and all their substance

that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went

forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And

Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh.

And the Canaanite was then in the land. And Jehovah appeared unto Abram,

and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there he builded an altar unto

Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah.

(Genesis 12:4-8)

Though he had been but a stranger and a pilgrim, obscure in his own day, Abraham's fame only grows with the passage of time. An altar he erected and a tent he set up. Such were the deeds of one who was to be a blessing to all families in the earth.

It was not ever onward and upward for Abraham but he was subject to reverses:

Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there, for the
famine was grievous in the land. (Genesis 12:10)

Conditions must have been severe in the extreme for Abraham to have given up his toe hold in the Promised Land but, no doubt, he returned to as soon as he could, this time a wealthy man, made so by Pharaoh who was anxious to be rid of him.

And it came to pass, when he [Abram] was come near to enter into Egypt,
that he said unto Sari his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman
to look upon. (Genesis 12:11)

Abraham's time in Egypt was not a happy experience. But whether it is Egypt, Babylon or America, all of the great empires have been built on the backs of the oppressed and it is not often easy to figure out how best to deport oneself in the face of such beastly power. Abraham knew himself to be vulnerable by reason of his beautiful wife, Sari. But what to do? He decided to pass her off as his sister. While this might have reduced his vulnerability, it probably increased hers. God revealed to Pharaoh, Abraham's deception; as well, He put the scare on Pharaoh.

Let's face it, this was not one of Abraham's finer moments. But if we are inclined to make heroes of the patriarchs and put them on a pedestal, we're missing the message of the book, that all have fallen short of the glory of God. It is the frank and realistic presentation of the shortcomings of Bible figures that lends these writings credibility.

A bi-metalist, Abraham maintained a diversified portfolio, for:

Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. (Genesis 13:2)

An aspect to Abraham's story often not confronted forthrightly, is his wealth, that he was quite wealthy, also, that he was a slaveholder. As Genesis reads, he had:

... sheep and oxen and she asses, and menservants and
maidservants, and she asses and camels. (Genesis 12:16)

Yet for all his holdings, Abraham, I believe, was no more inclined to rule over others, than to have others rule over him. Rather, he wanted autonomy that he might commune with God and bring up his family in the admonition of the Lord.

Fundamental to the Gospel is a live and let live approach, which means respecting the lives and property of others, and that was Abraham, who was even solicitous for those in Sodom and Gomorrah and bargained with God for their lives.

The lines along which Abraham's entourage operated were somewhat analogous to that of a wolf pack, where an alpha male emerges who chooses an alpha female, after which the rest of the pack dedicate themselves to advancing the interests of the alpha couple and their offspring. And, too, there is reciprocation, otherwise the whole social fabric, whether wolf or human, would collapse. In order to survive, they needed a high level of co-operation.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive,
he armed his trained servants, born in his own house three
hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. (Genesis 14:14)

Abraham's enterprising band was capable of mastering armies far larger than its own, an indication that they were highly motivated and not just hirelings going through the motions. When there is subordination as to function but equality before God, then, free men can achieve great things.

Some are surprised on learning of it, that Jesus said to his servants:

... he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. (Luke 22:36)

but when we go back to Abraham and see the circumstances of his existence, that he would have to either fight or flee, then we would understand that his choice was starkly this: either make a spirited defense on behalf of his family or forever lose their place in the Land. Clearly Jesus expects that we, too, will make a spirited

defense on behalf of hearth and home. At the same time as the family of faith withdraws from the Zionists circle of war, so do they rededicate themselves to moral and physical rearmament. The saying is this: Let every man of God be armed.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; . . .

(Ephesians 6:10-18)

We have to apply Abraham's example judiciously. Obviously, most of us are not nomads as Abraham was. The economy is different. Technology is different. One thing stays the same, namely, this: that the defense of liberty is no vice.

We might want to revisit the issue of social organization as modeled in the Bible, as, for instance, with Samuel and his school of the prophets; as with John the Baptist and his disciples in the wilderness; as with James the Just, the Lord's brother, and the community of Jesus in Jerusalem where they had all things in common.

When done right, face-to-face communities can achieve great things. When done wrong, there is just a big mess, for which no shortage of examples exist of cult leaders who build empires to their own egos.

Social scientists have detected the wisdom of decision making by small groups, that individuals with imperfect understanding, by banding together, can make good

choices. Likewise, they have determined that the decision-making capacity of small groups excels that of large groups.

Nevertheless, beware of small, face-to-face, intentional communities where there are too many intentions. Let the plan and purpose be well articulated or let it alone. If there isn't transparency, let it alone. If there is a leader who says: "God speaks to me and I to you," don't walk to the nearest exit, run, for that is a cult leader.

The Hospitality of Abraham

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

(Hebrews 13:2)

The hospitality of the Bedouin and other nomadic peoples is proverbial. Abraham was of that tradition:

And he [Abraham] lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, thee men stood
by him: and when he saw them he ran to meet them from the tent door,
and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have
found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let
a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves
under the tree: and I will fetch a morel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts;
after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant.

(Genesis 18:2-5)

Without the support of a good matriarch, a patriarch can hardly function. Sarah, whose name means "princess," a name given to her by God, was such a woman. While Abraham was without the tent entertaining his guests, Sarah was inside preparing food. At the door of the tent she heard the guests say that she would bear a son. As it is written:

Sarah laughed. (Genesis 18:12)

Abraham, too, had laughed but maybe it was a different kind of laugh. Maybe he laughed for joy where she had laughed sardonically, out of disbelief, for she said:

After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

On being discovered, Sarah denied having laughed but she had and for this received a mild rebuke. Come spring, though well past age, she bore a son, who, at God's command, was named Isaac. The root word for Isaac is the same as for laughter. Overall, Sarah is to be complimented for her faithfulness to God, as it is written:

Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

(Hebrews 11:11)

A blood covenant

Casual agreements are not sealed by blood, but one cuts a covenant:

And he [God] gave him [Abraham] the covenant of circumcision. (Acts 7:8)

A sign in the flesh, circumcision, like a sign in time, the Sabbath, serves the purpose of distinguishing, of setting apart, those who are of the Covenant from those who are not:

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God (El-Shaddai); walk before me and be thou perfect (i.e., upright, genuine). . . . And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. . . . This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

(Genesis 17:1, 7-8, 10-11)

The binding of Isaac:

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. And the angel

of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba. (Genesis 22:2-18)

This is not an easy subject to comment on. What was asked of Abraham few of us could deliver on, I suspect, which raises a question, was the faith of Abraham ever even remotely our own or are we just kidding ourselves? The mountain of faith is approached from many direction but how many ever actually summit? But in God all things are possible.

This Abraham learned, to put the Giver before the Gift. That is to say, he put God before God's promised son, Isaac, albeit, Isaac was the apple of his eye. He had learned how, if need be, to let go of that which he held, as if it weren't his at all. As well, he had learned how to hope against hope, that God would make a way where there seemed to be no way.

He [God] will ever be mindful of his Covenant. (Psalm 111:5)

As we have seen, the Covenant God made with Abraham, He extended to Isaac, then to Jacob, and so on, generation after generation, Moses, Joshua, King David, various Prophets, and even, as we see following, Jesus' mother, Mary, who said:

He [Jehovah] hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever. (Luke 1:54-55)

In due course, this same Covenant was extended to the people of the world and this on an equal basis. Just as the the Mosaic Law, which came along 430 years later, did not annul the Abrahamic Covenant, so also Jesus did not annul the Covenant.

Though there were many reiterations of the Covenant which we conveniently name:

Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, yet underlying them all there is only one Covenant. Though there were many promises, yet there is only one over-arching promise. Said the Apostle Paul in chains to King Agrippa:

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise
made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve
tribes, instantly serving God day and night hope to come. (Acts 26:6-7)

And what is that over-arching Promise? That God will supply the lamb:

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked. and behold behind
him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns and Abraham went
and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the
stead of his son. (Genesis 22:13)

Not untouched by human infirmity, our Savior, as the scapegoat and as the lamb of God, drank to the dregs our every woe:

. . . who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered
up prayers and supplications with strong crying and
tears unto him that was able to save him from death,
and was heard in that he feared; . . . (Hebrews 5:7)

Then, too, there is one inheritance:

And if ye be Christ's then ye are Abraham's seed, and
heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29)

To be a joint heir with Christ is to be an heir of Abraham. This, then, is the happy prospect Jesus offers his sheep:

Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared
for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

The Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,
preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be
blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

(Galatians 3:8-9)

Central to the preaching of the Gospel is the blood of Jesus and the cross of Christ, whereby Jesus become the sin-bearer for us all. Abraham could not have known this in advance. Instead, he lived it. Abraham was three days and three nights traveling with Isaac, to Mt Moriah, the place of sacrifice, the most awful journey he ever had to make. He was, as good as dead, crucified and buried. When he was ordered to free the ram from the thicket and sacrifice it in place of Isaac, then he was, as it were, raised from the dead to newness of life, having received a practical demonstration of substitutionary death; as well, the doctrine of resurrection:

accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead;

from whence also he received him in a figure. (Hebrews 11:19)

And how did Abraham come into the good of it? By faith:

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the

children of Abraham. (Galatians 3:7)

Again, notice how Paul ties together our Abrahamic inheritance with faith:

For the promise, that he should be heir to the world, was not to Abraham or his
seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (Romans 4:13)

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse

for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree: that the

blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ;

that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)

But let us give to James, the Lord's brother, the last word on the matter:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered
Isaac his son on he altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works,
and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled
which saith, Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for
righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (James 2:21-23)

Abraham's heritage

Those of Abraham's children derived by way of his wife, Sarah, survive today as Palestinians, some being Christians, some Muslims. Some of Abraham's children called "Sephardic," in fact, are Jews from Iran and Iraq and Yemen, and elsewhere besides, whose lineage traces back to Abraham. Most abundant of Abraham's children, however, are those by Hagar, these being Arabs. Then too, there are Abraham's spiritual children born again by faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country and the
west country; and I will bring them and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they
shall be my people and I shall be their God, in truth and in righteousness. (Zechariah 8:7-8)

Who are God's people to be saved from the east country and the west country? Not those who are neither physically, spiritually nor even religiously Abraham's offspring, namely, Asiatic, Ashkenazi interlopers, most of whom are irreligious non-believers. Abraham was not irreligious nor a non-believer. Some of them are Talmudic nitpickers. Abraham knew nothing of that either, for the Talmud promotes racial superiority of the rankest kind. Nor was Abraham a Pharisee.

The Jewish religion as it is today traces its descent without a break through all the
centuries from the Pharisees. Their leading ideas and methods found expression in
a literature of enormous extent, of which a very great deal is still in existence. The
Talmud is the largest and most important single piece and the study of it is essential
for any real understanding of Pharisaism. (The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, p. 474)

If we had any real interest in Abraham's physical progeny, as it were, Israel after the flesh, of whom Jesus was one, or, if we had any real interest in simple justice, then we would be championing the Palestinians' cause because the current situation is one of Ashkenazi interlopers arrogating to themselves the Law of Return, when they were never there in the first place, while denying to those who were there all along the right to continue being there.

It was the Palestinian people, not the Ashkenazis, who were dispersed to the four winds in 1948 by UN partition, this followed by ethnic cleansing and genocide. Though many weary decades as refugees since, the Palestinians, have been driven from pillar to post by the arrogant powers, yet have never forgotten their homeland.

The day will come when the Palestinian people will look on him whom they have pierced and mourn as for an only son.

Three times over, Abraham was informed that he should be the father of many nations. Signifying this, his name was altered from Abram to Abraham, which means "the father of a great multitude." No afterthought, it was foreseen from the beginning that not just from one ethnic group was included but all the world.

The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.

(Joel 3:16-21)

Conditionality

If discussions about faith too often seem like theological abstractions not well-connected to reality, maybe it is because such conversations are detached from historical persons in the context of their covenanted relationship with God.

Much to the chagrin of the once saved, always safe crowd, the Abrahamic Covenant consists of qualified promises to qualified people. Certitudinarians don't want to hear about any if/then conditional constructions, yet Jesus said:

If ye were Abraham's children [then] ye would
do the works of Abraham. (John 8:39)

One of the best known verses illustrating conditionality is II Chronicles 7:14:

If my people, which are called by my name will humble
themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from
their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will
forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Equally conditional, however, is this verse from II Peter, chapter one:

. . . giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue
knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance
patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly
kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things
be in you, and abound, [then] they make you that ye shall neither
be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And said the risen Christ to the community at Sardis:

If therefore thou shalt not watch, [then] I will come on thee as a thief, . . .

What Jesus did when the covenant people had failed

Initially Jesus went to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Once, however, that every institution of society had failed Jesus: the Davidic Kingship, the Temple priesthood, the Synagogue, rather than try to reform said synagogue or purify the Levitical priesthood, or reestablish the Davidic kingship, Jesus simply moved on by establishing as his fall back position the believing individual, the sanctified home and the summoned-out community, the latter being his little flock, his Abrahamic band in the wilderness, his *ekklesia*.

I [Jesus] say unto you, that many shall come from the
east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac
and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children
of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there
shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8:11-12)

With these words, Jesus swept aside any claim to an exclusive franchise held by the physical descendants of Abraham.

So far from undermining the foundation on which the Abrahamic Covenant was built, Jesus, instead, expanded out its superstructure by opening up its benefits to all, for as he said:

If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (John 12:32)

Thus did Jesus pronounce an end to an exclusively Jewish Tribal Project. From the first, the Jewish people, as Abraham's physical descendants, were always intended to be the vanguard for the Gospel. They were never intended to be the Superior Race that lords it over everyone else. It is their Chosen People Complex, the ultimate expression of which is Zionism, that has undone them.

Setting the tone for inclusion, Jesus in a parable elevated for purpose of illustration

one from a despised ethnic group, a Samaritan, whose compassion for a wounded wayfarer contrasted sharply with that of a Levite who crossed over to the other side of the road.

Such is the East-ness and the West-ness of it all, for the true Israel of God cannot help but witness to the light within others, for, notwithstanding cultural divides or divergent traditions, no one people has a monopoly on neighborliness or pious impulses. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that a universal faith would be founded on universal respect. And yet tribal values remain. Universal does not mean uniform. Unity and diversity coincide.

By helping us to see possibilities where before we had only seen impossibilities, Jesus encourages us to reach out to those of other races and religions and social and economic backgrounds, even the dispossessed called untouchables. thereby throwing wide open to all the doors to redemptive fellowship.

Meanwhile, in deconstructing the narrative of power, in these uncompromising words, Jesus told the chief priests and elders:

The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to
a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (Matthew 21:43)

So what nation would that be? Well do we know, for it is written:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
... which in times past were not a people, but are now the people
of God ... (I Peter 2:9-10)

Rather than to reform any of the aforementioned institutions: the Synagogue, the Levitical priesthood or the Davidic kingship, Jesus simply moved on. What he moved on to was what Abraham had with God from the beginning, a one-on-one relationship between man and his maker. Thus, in answer to the question, "what nation," it was a spiritual nation, being Abraham's spiritual progeny who have no

intermediary, except the man, Christ Jesus. Thus did Jesus renew and extend the Covenant according to its original design both to those living under the Law of Moses and to those not living under the Law of Moses:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; . . . Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God . . . (Ephesians 2:11-15, 19)

Signs of the Covenant

Previously circumcision had been a sign of the Covenant (see Genesis 17:10-11), so also had been the keeping of the Sabbath been a sign of the covenant, but once uncircumcised Gentiles had been freely welcomed into the fold, circumcision and Sabbath both ceased to serve their original function as distinguishing tokens, separating those within from those without. This is not to say that the practice of circumcision or Sabbath-keeping had been abolished, only that their meaning had been altered to the lesser role of making an ethnic distinction. But how does this work out on a practical level?

In thy [Abraham's] seed shall all nations of the world be blessed. (Genesis 22:17)

As we have already seen, Paul's invitation is to those who were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise" to view themselves, instead, as having been included.

There is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

(Romans 3:30)

The controversy over circumcision was never really about a small flap of skin in a sensitive place; rather, it has to do with how Jews and Gentiles relate to each other and, as well, how they relate to Christ. It was Paul's essential insight that the nations are grafted into the Abrahamic heritage, not by any ritual act, but by faith, and the same goes for the Jews. More than just the progenitor of another Middle Eastern nation, however exalted, Abraham had the quality of faith that God approves of:

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision or uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed upon them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which be of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise be sure to all the seed; not to that only of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, yet neither the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. (Romans 4)

Paul elsewhere says that the "Law is good" (I Timothy 1:8), and credits to it many valuable societal functions. Paul was not against the Law. His point is that the Law is no substitute for hope, faith or charity.

Meanwhile, once that Jewish tribalism and Gentile barbarism are subsumed into Christian universalism, then peace emerges between them on the basis of equality.

... and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles was also poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 10:45)

From earliest days to the present, vying for attention have been two extremes. On the one hand are those who asserted that all who would be saved must be circumcised (the position of the circumcision party who so bedeviled Paul):

And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. (Acts 15:1)

On the other hand, the Church's position from the 2nd century onward, is that none should be circumcised. Once the apostolic community in Jerusalem was wiped out in 135 AD, in the Hadrianic war, law-observant Nazarenes the world over found themselves relegated to the ranks of a heretical sect and ostracized by the proto-Roman Catholic Church. Not that one need resort to the 2nd century; even in the 1st

century the Gentile/Jewish relationship occasioned misunderstandings. For instance, when James, brother of our Lord, brought to Paul's attention a false rumor claiming that Paul was teaching Jews in the dispersion to forsake Moses, also, to forgo the practice of circumcision, Paul quickly acceded to James's advice to participate in a purification rite to demonstrate his ongoing commitment to the Law. Indicating the compatibility of Christian faith and Mosaic observance, James said to Paul:

Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all
zealous of the law: . . . (Acts 21:21)

Paul was too insightful a person to hang up over mere symbols but he sought for underlying realities. His expressed position regarding circumcision is this:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision but a new creature.
And as many as walk by this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.
(Galatians 6:15-16)

The promises given Abraham were for all people and for all generations with Jesus the guarantor, as well, their fulfillment. Instead of there being a new, replacement Israel, as some suppose the Church to be, there is the same Israel of old, going back to Abraham and to Abraham's grandson, Jacob, whom the angel renamed "Israel."

Actually, the angel that struggled with Jacob through the night until daybreak probably (and some would say, most certainly) was Jesus, who, as the Israel of God, lent to Jacob his own name, a name which means "prince of God," Jesus being that prince. To the same extent that we are in Christ, and he in us, then to the same extent are we, too, the Israel of God.

Those evangelical Christians (which is most of them) who want to exult the present political entity called "the State of Israel," in so doing, substitute bad news for good. In that respect, they make themselves the enemy of the Gospel, for the nasty, racist, Jews-only State is a murderous imposture and abomination.

As was Jacob so also is Jesus' little flock, the Israel of God. Said Jesus:

"Fear not, little flock; it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)

As we see above, the Kingdom is given to the little flock, who, as the Israel of God, are the children of Abraham. Whereas a church building has a specific location, and their services a set time, the little flock, in its *ad hoc* two-ness and three-ness meets in the Spirit, which is wherever Jesus is found:

For where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.

(Matthew 18:20)

Presumably Jesus said: "On this rock I will build my church." No matter how many translations report his having said this, in fact he never did. The problem here is one of a substitution of words. Our word "church" is merely the Greek word, *kyriakon*, meaning, the Lord's house, being transliterated but the underlying Greek word is *ekklesia*. Why is one Greek word translated by another Greek word? *Ekklesia* is not an edifice, the Lord's house, much less is it an organization, a congregation or a denomination; rather, it is a quality of fellowship which partakes of the divine.

That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship

(koinonia) with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

(1 John 1:3)

The organizing principle we seek is holy fellowship. One must be attentive to the Spirit or else it is back to dead formalism.

Alas, Good News does not always go down too well in conventional Christian settings. Only Jesus through the Holy Spirit can save. What that means is that none of the churchly ceremonials, call them "sacraments," if you will, are efficacious. They cannot save. Moreover, no churchly hierarchy is divinely ordained. "Apostolic succession" is little more than a jobs program for out-of-work prelates.

When Jesus said: "follow me," he didn't mean for us to go join an organization; rather, he meant for us to be like him. Surely, that is what is needed in today's world, not cheap imitations, but the real deal, Christ in us, the hope of glory. It is the life of God in the heart of man that makes the difference.

On reflection, given repeated demonstrations of institutional frailty, this is Good News, that God is a real and present help, for human organizations are weak reeds on which to place the weight of our eternal well-being.

History amply demonstrates, where one organization predominates, it becomes oppressive; where two exist, they fight each other; where there are three, two of them will gang up on the third. But where there are many, still a problem exists, for how many squabbling sects, mired in parochialism, do we need?

The way of the Nazarene is none of the above. Rather than a hegemonic monolith; Jesus' little flock is the community of the faithful whom God has called out from the world (*ek-* out, *klessia* called), whereas, as we have seen, the word "church" comes from a completely different Greek word, with a completely different meaning.

All over the world little flocks of Jesus devotedly seek to being righteous in their food and righteous in their drink and righteous in their communications, and, indeed, in all of life's endeavors and in so doing, actively resist the whole panoply of initiatives undertaken by the Zionist New World Order, whether they be such things as core curriculum education, forced vaccination, fluoride, smart (spy) meters, GMO, militarism and aggressive war. Instead of imbibing bilge from dirty cesspools, the prostitute mass media, they seek to drink from living waters:

Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that
hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine
and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye
spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that
which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that
which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline
your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and
I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure
mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the
people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold thou shalt
call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not
thee shall run unto thee because of Jehovah thy God, and for the
Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. (Isaiah 55:1-5)

The operative covenant

In their undue haste to be rid of the Abrahamic Covenant, it is often claimed in evangelical circles that we are under the New Covenant, which makes all else going before it obsolete. But wait a minute, has anyone bothered to check the language of Jeremiah, chapter 31, to see if that is so? By the Law of First Mention in Scripture a word or concept is defined by its first usage. Therefore, let us see how Jeremiah 31:34, reads:

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying,
Know Jehovah: for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them,
saith Jehovah.

Such broad knowledge of God could only be true if all eyes could see Jesus, as in his Millennial reign. Clearly, the New Covenant applies in its fullness, not to current conditions, but, rather, to a better world to come.

This, by the way, is how one ends up with a covenantless Christianity: first, deny the currently operative covenant; then embrace the covenant that is not yet operative; after which, fall in the crack between the two.

There is a strain of evangelical Christianity called "dispensationalism" that goes beyond mere covenantlessness to actively opposing the Covenant. By refracting Scripture through a strange, arcane overlay, it distinguishes a multiplicity of dispensations, including a "dispensation of Law" and a "dispensation of Grace":

The Old Covenant . . . holds us in bondage, but the New brings us into freedom.

The Old involves a curse, but the New imparts a blessing. In the Old man seeks

God, but in the New God seeks man. By the Old man is condemned as a sinner,

but by the New he is delivered from his sin. In the Old God says 'you cannot',

but in the New Christ says 'I can'. The Old covenant is really bad news, but the

New Covenant is good News, that is, Gospel. . . . How wonderful is the contrast:

Moses and Christ; Mosaism and Christianity; Death and Life; on Stone and in the Heart;

Letter and Spirit; condemnation and Righteousness; Passing and Permanent; face

Veiled and Unveiled; Bondage and Freedom; Transience and Transformation. . . .

there are at least ten points of contrast between the Old and the New dispensations.

Christianity is not glorified Judaism; it is something entirely new. There is a fundamental difference between the Law and the Gospel.

(W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, Kregel Publications, 1994)

It is not just the Hebrew Scriptures and the Covenant they promote that are to be set aside as being of another dispensation but Jesus' own teachings are also to be set aside.

Many interpreters see the Sermon on the Mount as directly and primarily applicable to Christians today. To do this, interpreters depend heavily on the method of spiritualization, for it is apparent that the laws and regulations found in the Sermon cannot be directly applied today without producing insurmountable problems and reproductions.

As Charles Ryrie observes: "But if the laws of the Sermon are to be obeyed today they could not be taken literally, for as [George Eldon] Ladd points out, every businessman would go bankrupt giving to those who ask of him. This is the dilemma every interpreter faces. If literal, it cannot be for today; if for today, it cannot be literal. Moreover, a casual reading of the Sermon reveals that it contains an embarrassing absence of church truths.

In view of these considerations, the proper conclusion with regards to the Sermon on the Mount is that the full and non-modified fulfillment of this portion of 'Matthew is possible only in relationship to the future institution of the messianic Kingdom. It is primarily to the nation of Israel as she anticipates the institution of the kingdom at the millennium. It has no primary application in the church and should not be so taken.

(Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*)

Here's a fine situation, the Law, presumably, has been annulled, yet Jesus' New Covenant teachings need not be acted upon because the Millennium has yet to arrive. Such is the way of the antinomian, Zionized, dispensationalized Church.

Fundamentalist Christianity's expressed goal is that of getting men out of hell and into heaven. Overlooked is the fact that in between conversion and death there is a life to be lived. Theirs is simply too narrow a perspective on which to build a moral community.

Arguably the most influential systematic theologian of his day, representing the Dispensationalist viewpoint, Lewis Sperry Chafer of Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote:

The dispensationalist believes throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is to Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity.

There remains to be recognized a heavenly covenant for the heavenly people, which is also styled like the proceeding one for Israel the New Covenant. It is made in the blood of Christ (Mark 14:24) and continues in effect throughout this age, whereas the new Covenant made with Israel happens to be future in its application. To suppose that these two covenants -- one for Israel and one for the church -- are the same is to assume that there is a latitude of common interest between God's purpose for Israel and His purpose for the Church.

One would suppose that to postulate two New Covenants, one for the Gentiles and one for the Jews, would require some kind of biblical confirmation. And, indeed, the Dispensationalists have conjured up one, or so they think, this found in God's promise to Abraham:

I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. (Genesis 22:17)

As anyone reasonably familiar with biblical cadence knows, the Hebraic mindset has a penchant for taking a double bite at the apple. Examples of this abound. as:

"O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen" (Psalm 105).

A fine piece of sophistry is the notion that the Church represents the heavenly, star people, while Israel (the modern State of Israel?) represents the earthly, sand people. And shall we create yet a third category for the "children of Zion"? But if anyone does not yet see that a distinction without a difference is being made, let them ponder Nehemiah, chapter nine, where Abraham's physical seed will be as the stars of heaven:

Thou art Jehovah the God who did choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees and gavest him the name of Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land . . . to his seed . . . Their children thou multiplied as *the stars of heaven*, and broughtest them into the land promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. (Nehemiah 9:7-8, 23)

Rather than postulate two New Covenants, a complete novelty if ever there was one; or two chosen peoples, one, being the Jews, who are God's covenanted bride, the other being Gentiles, who are, at best, God's concubine, let us affirm that there is one new man in Christ, be he Jew or Gentile and that these are the Israel of God.

And rather than postulate multiple dispensations which separate Abraham from his Christian followers by at least two dispensations, let us reaffirm the continuity of Scripture by asserting the universality of our Abrahamic heritage, for by identifying with Abraham, we dispel the dispensationalists' fractured fairytale that which is as a stumbling block thrown in our path. Let us take to heart these words:

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

Look unto Abraham your father." (Isaiah 51:1-2)

What then of "The promise" above? This is "the same promise" God made to Isaac and Jacob, (see Hebrews 11:9-10). It is a covenanted promise. To talk of covenantless Christianity is to talk nonsense to the covenanted sons of Abraham.

Many times through history the conditions God placed on His Covenant have been breached. Nevertheless, God's redemptive path continues to unfold, for His promises not being subject to contingency, as are man's, but are immutable decrees.

O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.

Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. He is the Lord our God: his judgments are in all the earth. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: when they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

(Psalm 105:1-15)

ARE the Children of Abraham the Israel of God?

For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

(Romans 9:6-7)

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, . . . who put no confidence in the flesh.

(Philippians 3:3)

Let us further examine the question key to the Dispensationalists's scheme of things regarding the children of Abraham and the children of Israel. A childish question, of

course they are one and the same. But it is the key issue with Nevertheless, it is contested by those seeking by any means to reserve the term "Israel" for Jews only and wrest it away from Gentile children of Abraham. One text they resort to is Acts 9:15, where Jesus says to Ananias regarding Paul:

Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles,
and kings, and the children of Israel: . . . (Acts 9:15)

Here we see that the expression "children of Israel" refers to non-believing, physical descendants as distinguished from "Gentiles." Deceitful handlers of Scripture would have us turn next to Galatians 3:7, which reads:

Know ye therefore that they which are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Ah ha! By juxtaposing these two verses, we are suppose to draw the conclusion that there are two categories: one being, Gentile "children of Abraham" and, two, Jewish "children of Israel." This is utter nonsense because, in point of fact, there are physical and spiritual children of Israel; as well, there are physical and spiritual children of Abraham. Let us take to heart that which John the Baptist said in exhorting those who somehow thought their physical descent from Abraham privileged them:

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves that we have
Abraham for our father. For I tell you out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

(Luke 3:7-8)

Paul at Antioch in Acts 13:24, Paul speaks of John as having preached beforehand "the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel," after which (verse 26) he quotes John the Baptist as saying:

Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whoever among you
feareth God, to you is the word of salvation sent. (Acts 13:26)

If "the sons of Abraham" and the "sons of Israel" are interchangeable expressions, then the only other point the Zionized dispensationalists have to make has to do with physical descent, the kinship factor, how we are obliged to get behind the racial descendants of Abraham, yet most modern "Jews" are Khazar Turks. According to Scripture, these Ashkenazi are descended from Japheth, not Shem:

Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth: . . . The sons of Japheth: Gomer, and Magog, . . . And the sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz and Riphath . . .

(Genesis 10:1-3)

But even if some of the present day Israelis are descended from the original stock of patriarchs, as Paul says above, "not all who are descended from Israel are Israel."

The covenantal promise regarding the Land has not been forgotten but will be fulfilled in due course but do we really know to whom the Land was promised? The Lord said to Abraham, after he had reached Canaan:

Unto thy seed will I give this land. (Genesis 12:7)

This ought to settle the matter, for Christ being the seed is heir to the Land. By his sacrificial death, Jesus provided the surety or down payment on the world to come and when he returns in power, he will make a final, just settlement. Meanwhile, let us seek to occupy the same ground as Abraham did, whom God complimented because he faithfully established God's order within his household.

God's threefold refrain

I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

What does that mean? First, this is God's endorsement of these men. Beyond that, each of these men revealed some new facet of God's own character or activity. His fatherly concern is seen in Abraham; the obedience of His son is seen in Isaac, who only did that which he saw his father, Abraham, do; and then there is the struggling grandson, Jacob, renamed Israel, whose life is a lesson in the ministry of the Holy Spirit striving with our own spirit.

Not subordinated to any human religion or priesthood, Abraham, at God's behest, pioneered a paradigm shift in humankind's relationship with God, this predicated on the making of personal choices. I term it "God's freedom program," whereby each individual is given the space to be whom he will be before God.

If we are truly the children of Abraham, then we need to make the journey that Abraham made. Yet how many actually ever make that journey? I ask people, have

you made the journey? but they have no idea what I am talking about. It is as if they were still in Haran or else in Egypt with no intention of departing.

Three times in Scripture Abraham is referred to as the friend of God:

Art not thou our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land . . .

and gave it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend for ever? (II Chronicles 20:7)

When Abraham believed God "it was imputed to him for righteousness,

and he was called the friend of God. (James 2:23)

Thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham,

my Friend. (Isaiah 41:8)

Said Peter to his brethren after the flesh:

Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren,

like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. (Acts 12:12-26)

Nothing here about blessing the Jew. Much here about the Jew blessing Jesus. As we see above, the seed of Abraham is not the Jewish people; the seed is Jesus.

Melchizedek

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. (Genesis 14:18)

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose descent is not counted from them

received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. (Hebrews 7:1-10)

Abraham subordinated himself to Melchizedek to whom he gave the tithe, the lesser giving to the greater. Beware, however, various Melchizedek priesthoods, so-called, for schemes they are to part us from our money.

The last word

Abraham is introduced into the story line of Genesis at the end of chapter eleven, while the last account we have of him, which is of his death and burial, occurs at the beginning of chapter 25. Thereafter, the rest of the book is devoted to telling the story of Abraham's immediate descendants: Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Chapter 23 of Genesis gives a touching, detailed account of the death and burial of Abraham's wife, Sarah. After that we are given the rather anticlimactic statement that Abraham had concubines and additional children. All of this fits a pattern, that Abraham kept slaves or that Abraham was a haggler who even haggled with God over how many righteous in Sodom would to cause God to spare the city.

To some extent, Abraham was a man of his times, which were rude and unsettled; to some extent Abraham was a man of his station in life; he was a petty potentate. We are not suppose to have an unrealistic assessment. While all of Scripture exists for our edification; not all of it is to be emulated.

The foregoing hardly constitutes a comprehensive telling, for I have hit on a few of the highlights, while skipping over much of the rest of the story.

Salt and light

As self-respecting human beings in a covenant relationship with God, that being the Abrahamic Covenant, it is our privilege and duty to uphold our end of things, for with a covenanted partnership comes duties and responsibilities, meaning we have to walk the walk, which to their credit many are eager to do.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, improving the time for
the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Walk circumspectly" (i.e., with respect to all circumstances); "not as fools" (i.e., not fooled by misdirection from the mistaken one); "but as wise," (dove innocent, serpent wise, to paraphrase the Lord); "improving the time" (thus proving ourselves) "for the days are evil" (made so by the god of this world.)

This is no time for hand-folding and star-gazing. We were not called to be the salt of the prayer meeting or the light of the church steeple; rather, our Lord called us to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14). In the symbolic language of Scripture, salt stands for that which is enduring, for that which is dependable. "A covenant of salt forever," said Jehovah. (Numbers 18:19). From a position of enduring integrity, we are to shine forth as beacons of light in a darkened world.

Notice who is suppose to be salt and who is suppose to be light, we who, that's who. But if we are only projecting images of ourselves, we are not light and if we are only trying harder, we are not salt.

We were made to serve God in his presence in the garden of Eden but we were kicked out. We were made in God's image but that image has suffered effacement.

Now what? The key to being made whole is wholesomeness itself, namely, having the image of God restored. This, a work of restoration, may begin in a discrete moment of time, as at the time of our first repenting, but it must continue on from there to branch out as a process of moral transformation. A work of moral

transformation can hardly transpire through a heap of ruins, which is about what many of us are when left to our own devices, yet God is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds and faithful to save all who call on Him.

. . . if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

(Romans 10:9-11)

Taking a beachhead is hardly the same thing as wining the war. We have to move inland or else possibly find ourselves being thrown off the beachhead.

The robust redemption Jesus offers is highly reaffirming of the life we now live. A here-and-now presence, Jesus lives not just in our hearts but, if we will allow it, in our fantasies, our friendships, our finances, indeed, in all areas of our being and existence. He is in us to liberate the whole man: body, soul and spirit, and to radiate out from each individual he indwells to transform culture and society.

In this we are promised help:

"I am going to send you what my father has promised: but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49)

Jesus, the master "Tailor," clothes us with the Holy Spirit. He does not provide us with a "one size fits all" garment. He takes into consideration all our "measurements" . . . our personality, our strengths, our weaknesses, our culture, genetic and environmental factors. We can't all wear identical clothes nor does Jesus baptize everyone in the holy Spirit in the same fashion. But you can rest assured of this, He has a purpose and a plan for your life that takes everything about you into consideration. He will see that you are properly dressed for the occasion (R. Glenn Brown, Pentecost Revisited)

It only makes sense that those who most take to heart God's call end up with the best assignments. Certainly that was true of St. Theresa of Avilla, who wrote:

He desired me so I came close.

No one can near God unless he has
prepared a bed for you.

A thousand souls hear his call every second,
but most everyone who looks into life's mirror and
says, "I am not worthy to leave this sadness."

When I first heard his courting song, I too
looked at all I had done in my life and said,

"How can I gaze into His omnipresent eyes?"

I spoke these words with all my heart,

But then He sang again, a song even sweeter, and when
I tried to shame myself once more from His presence
God showed me His compassion and spoke a divine truth,

I made you, dear, and all I make is perfect,
Please come close, for I desire you.

Jesus promised

Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father,
or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive
an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children,
and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)

The work that began with Abraham almost 4000 years ago was renewed by Jesus almost 2000 years ago. From Abraham to Jesus were the former years. From Jesus to the present are the latter years. The Abrahamic faith has tremendous appeal, yet it is like a hug without a kiss. Jesus is needed to make it complete.

Nor is it “Lo, he is here!” nor “Lo, there!” Spiritual leaven is hidden. He is found where he is found. Those who have eyes to see, see it. Those who don’t, don’t.

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

(Hebrew 6:13-20)

Recap

Said Stephen just before he was stoned to death:

Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

(Acts 7:2-8)

The blessed hope

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 2:11-14)

What does Paul mean by “that blessed hope”? Let us seek an answer in Genesis where, in an ongoing conversation between God and Abraham, God said:

I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. . . .
I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. (Genesis 15:7, 17:8)

When Abraham asked God: “Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it [the Land]?” (Genesis 15:8), God replied:

Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. . . . And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: . . . (Genesis 15:9-12, 17-18)

As we see above, Abraham was specifically singled out by name to receive the promise of the Land, yet we know that in his life time he did not receive said

promise. Then, below, we see that which was promised to Abraham “and his seed after him” applies to “the heirs of promise,” to “us,” says the author of Hebrews:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, . . . (Hebrews 6:13-19)

The passage above teaches that the hope Abraham had, is the hope that followers of Jesus have, namely, the future fulfillment of the Land promise. Along this same line the Psalmist wrote:

To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness: where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works. Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

(Psalm 95:8-11)

Covering the same ground as did the Psalmist, the writer of Hebrews states:

And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their

heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; while it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: again, he limiteth a certain day, saying hin David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:5-4:11)

As we see above, there was yet a future fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, not realized in Joshua's day, not realized in David's day, not realized in Jesus' day,

not realized in the apostles' day, namely, possession of the land. This is the "hope set before us" in Hebrews 6. The promise that Abraham and his seed are to be "heir of the world" (Romans 4:13) is the same promise that David writes of in Psalm 37:

For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon Jehovah, they shall inherit the earth.

[9] the meek shall inherit the earth; [11] their inheritance shall be for ever. [18] The righteous

shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. ... [29] Wait on Jehovah, and keep his way,

and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. [34]

There is yet future the Day of Jehovah, when all the armies of the world will gather against Jerusalem but Jehovah will vanquish them and Jesus will be installed as ruler of the earth, and so will all Israel be saved, even as Jesus said, "the meek shall inherit the earth." That is the blessed hope. The heavenly kingdom is not the kingdom in heaven but the quality of heaven on earth, fulfilling the promise to Abraham.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. These all [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . . . And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (Hebrews 11:10-11, 13, 39-40)

The city which Abraham was looking for is Jerusalem.

But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. (Isaiah 65:18-19)