

**Abrahams Seed
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May, 2003
Thousand Oaks, CA**

Editor's note: The following essay was penned by John in response to an e-mail comment directed to him. Jan Antonsson

Hi guys,

It's nice "meeting" you and to hear of your devotion to the quest for truth, your insistence on testing all things and that you are of the tradition of the noble Bereans in checking all assertions by scripture.

So that you'll know something of my mentality; I have a compulsive passion to get to the root of issues, to find that foundational premise which is sure and unshakable upon which one may, with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, build an edifice of understanding that is secure.

Being so-minded, I read very carefully your e-mail to our mutual friend to which he was responding and quickly came to the conclusion that you had referred to a most crucial theological consideration regarding "Abraham's seed."

The great majority of biblical interpreters fail to fully grasp the utter, unqualified Christ-centeredness of Pauline theology. To accurately follow Paul's thought, one must understand the centrality of what his oft repeated phrase, "in Christ," means to his inspired rationale. "Abraham's seed" means Christ to Paul. The Apostle is fixated by the truth that Christ is the "Seed," singular, that is, "not of seeds," but of the Seed (Gal. 3:16).

For Paul, all the promises given to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ, by Whom God carried out His eonian purpose. He states this with magnificent boldness in Eph. 3:11, "This was in accordance with the eternal (eonion) purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NAS). The KJV translation of that verse is completely without warrant in respect to using the word "purposed" instead of "carried out." The Amplified Version has it very accurately as, "...realized and carried out." For the KJV to translate it as the purpose of God being limited to "purposed" in Christ is a flagrant disregard of the Greek.

Conventional evangelical theology, in effect, claims that God's purpose, particularly in respect to man's salvation, is carried out only when men agree to being saved, and that, by what must be understood as a sovereign act of their volition, though aided by the Spirit. This makes our salvation a

matter of a bilateral covenant, requiring the agreement of both parties, God and man.

But, the scripture is very clear that the new covenant differs, quite essentially, from the old covenant at that very point. The old covenant failed to bring men to righteousness, because God and men together had to do their parts, so, of course, it was doomed to failure, which was according to God's plan and foreknowledge. It was a failure in respect to bringing men to righteousness, but a complete success in exposing man's inability to attain to righteousness by means of an imposed external standard of behavior.

But the new covenant is based on the promise of God to Abraham, not the legal demand of God, and the verse that nails it down once and for all is, II Cor. 1:20, "For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him (Christ) they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." (NAS) How very clear that is: All the promises of God have the required yes in Christ and our agreement (amen) "also" is in Him.

So, to repeat, how does our faith fit into the picture? True understanding of this requires that we see that everything, including our faith, is to be found in Christ and to be in Christ is not a matter of our choice, but God's. Paul is very clear on this when He says that "It is of God that ye are in Christ Jesus....." (I Cor. 1:30, KJV), but the NAS is even clearer, rendering it, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus...." and His assertion is traceable back to something that Paul, as a former Pharisee of Pharisees was very aware of, that man was created in the image of God.

Relying on scripture to interpret scripture, we understand that "in the image of God" (Gen. 2:27) is the Old Testament equivalent of the Pauline, "in Christ," for Paul always speaks of Christ, as the "image of God" (Col. 1:15). At the very outset, Holy Writ brings us face to face with the purpose and act of God to place Adam (man) in Christ. It is there, in Him that all that is of spiritual value proceeds, including faith.

It is not our faith, as something independent which we add to the mix, but the "faith of Christ" (Gal. 2:20), which means exactly that, Christ's faith, which is ours in Him, and operates subjectively in us as one element of His indwelling life.

We fail to realize that the faith that God recognized in Abraham as righteousness was His own righteousness in the form of faith and, to repeat, it was the faith of Christ, God's Seed, Who became in the eon, Abraham's Seed.

Remember that Paul, in contrasting the dispensation of the law with the dispensation of grace, always links faith with the righteousness of God.

"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (Rom. 1:17, NIV).

There is only One who totally pleases God in every respect, including the element of faith, and that is Christ Himself. The common idea is that Christ does not start to work in a life until that one decides to believe, but the truth is that our believing is the first thing produced by Christ working in us.

What western "orthodoxy" particularly can't seem to get hold of is that it is not if men WILL believe, but WHEN men will believe. The Bible gives overwhelming testimony to God's determination to save all men, but where the conventional mind-set gets hung up is over the myth that death ends all of God's redemptive activity and the possibility of a person coming to saving faith. It's a death-glorifying theology born in the darkness of the earliest stages of Romanism and totally unsupported by scripture.

The final picture that scripture gives us is not that of death being the victor over the vast majority of mankind, but the picture of the all-victorious life of Christ which defeats the last enemy, death.

Please be assured that I would be delighted to pursue these things with you and to honestly attempt to answer any questions you'd like to give me a crack at.

Wishing you God's blessing, I am,

**Enthralled by His glory and grace,
John**