

# **The Gospel Explained and Expounded**

Many find the Bible difficult to understand. This is because they lack the key that will unlock its secrets. The Gospel-message comprises such a key, and is the foundation of all that the Bible teaches or prophesies. But what is the true Gospel message?

## **The Gospel Key**

The Bible is a library of sixty-six books presenting God's purpose with the earth, and His plan of redemption for man. These books were written over a period of almost 1,600 years, and their various authors, or amanuenses rather (for the writers of the Bible wrote by the inspiration of God) were drawn from all ranks of society. Kings, statesmen, priests, scribes, shepherds, fishermen, scholars all played a part in producing it; and yet, despite the great divergence of time and class among the writers, there is complete harmony in all that they teach and record. Each of the writers presents a different facet of the one great hope."

The theme that unites all these books is termed "the Gospel." An understanding of its teaching acts as a key, unlocking the secrets of God's purpose with the earth. Unfortunately, though many refer to the Gospel, few really understand its teaching. To most, the true teaching of the Bible is as a closed book.

Yet eternal salvation is bound up in an understanding of the Gospel (see Romans 1:16); and for that purpose we urge that you closely and critically examine what we set before you in this book.

The word "Gospel" signifies "good news" or "glad tidings." It is sometimes styled in Scripture the "Gospel of God," because it is good news emanating from Him, in contradistinction to spurious messages of goodwill that emanate from man.

It is important to comprehend the true message of the Gospel. Paul wrote:

"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

If an inspired Apostle were not exempt from such a curse if he preached a perverted gospel, certainly lesser men will not be exempted either. Unfortunately, Christendom has strayed from the true understanding of the Bible, and, therefore, a curse rests upon it. In consequence, its history is a record of discord, trouble, bloodshed, continuing and growing evil. True peace it knows not.

### **The Gospel Speaks Of The Future**

The Gospel is a simple statement of God's purpose with humanity. In its simplest form, it was condensed by Paul into seven words. He wrote:

"God preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying: IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED" (Galatians 3:8).

Those seven words: "In thee shall all nations be blessed" epitomize the whole purpose of God: the basic message of the Bible. All else it teaches is but an amplification of this promise and declaration. It shows that the Gospel relates God's future purpose to bring about a state of blessedness upon the earth.

Certainly the nations are not blessed today. On the contrary, violence, crime, immorality and other evils grow in intensity, so that mankind, with the possibility of nuclear war, is in danger of annihilation. The Gospel, however, proclaims that conditions will not always be as they are today; that God will intervene to bring about His promised state of blessedness on earth.

The Gospel, therefore, is prophetic: it speaks of the future. Furthermore, we learn from Paul's statement above, that it was preached to Abraham in the form of promise. In another place, Paul taught that Jesus Christ appeared "to confirm the promises made

unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8). The promises referred to were those made to the fathers of the Jewish race: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Peter declared:

"There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

Paul taught that the Gospel was comprehended in the promises God made to Abraham. Therefore, to gain the true understanding of the Bible, we must know something of Abraham.

### **Abraham - The Friend Of God (James 2:23)**

The biography of Abraham is compressed into about twelve chapters of the Bible (Genesis 12 to 24), which would take about forty minutes to read. We earnestly counsel the reader to pay himself the compliment of reading this portion of the Bible, for the life of Abraham forms a pattern for all true believers to follow (see Romans 4:23-24).

Abraham was first an idolator in Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11:28; Joshua 24:2). He heard the call of God and separated himself to travel to Haran in company with other members of his family. There he remained for a while until again God called him, and made unto him certain promises on condition that he move from Haran to the land that God would show him (later known as the land of Israel). This required that he pass over the river Euphrates. By so doing, he was typically baptized.

Abraham's biography, therefore, presents the following developments:

1. An unbeliever without hope in the midst of idolatry;
2. At Haran learning of the purpose of God, and the requirements for individual salvation;

3. As a believer walking in hope, looking to the future when he shall rise from the dead to an eternal inheritance upon earth.

Genesis 12:1-3 outlines the promises that God made to Abraham. They can be divided as follows:

1. A national promise - he will become a great nation;
2. A personal promise - his name will be great in all the earth and he will be a blessing;
3. A family promise - God will bless those who bless Abraham;
4. An international promise - in him all families of the earth will be blessed.

This last item is quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:8 as epitomizing the Gospel message.

The four-fold aspect of the promise made to Abraham comprises every part of the Bible message.

### **Consider The National Promise**

Let us give brief consideration to these four aspects of the promise. First, let us realize that none of them has yet had complete fulfillment; but that they will have when the Kingdom of God is set up on earth.

Take the first aspect. Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, are not yet a "great nation." As a matter of fact, they are noted for their sins rather than their virtues. And of all books, the Bible is most outspoken in recording their failures. It declares:

"They mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chronicles 36:16).

Their greatest act of infamy, of course, was in collaborating with their Gentile rulers, to crucify the Lord. For this supreme act of rebellion, they were scattered among all nations.

Yet they have never been destroyed. In spite of the terrible punishment meted out against them, and the efforts made by cruel and ruthless men of power to destroy them, they have still retained their identity. This is in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, founded upon the promise made to Abraham. The Bible declares:

"I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jeremiah 30:11).

How amazingly true these words have proved! The Jews were scattered into all nations and subjected to terrible punishment, but they have invariably survived their oppressors, no matter how powerful the latter have been. Today, Israel is a nation again, and its modern revival testifies to a divine hand. This is in partial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham; and is a step towards developing the Jewish people into "a great nation." Thus the Bible predicts both the scattering and the regathering of Israel (Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 37:12). God will yet discipline and educate the nation of Israel, first humbling it by national reverses of attitude through Armageddon, and afterwards elevating it to national greatness. This will be in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. God declared:

"I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for MINE HOLY NAME'S SAKE, which ye have profaned among the nations whither ye went" (Ezekiel 36:22).

God has preserved Israel, and will yet completely restore the nation, elevating it to national "greatness," "for His name's sake." A man's name is honored if, in spite of anything, he stands to his word, and fulfils his promise. God acts upon the same principle. He promised Abraham that his descendants would be formed into "a great nation," and despite all that Israel has done to the contrary, and the reverses it has suffered as a result; despite Jewish rebellion against God and His truth, the promise to Abraham is in course of

being fulfilled today in the restoration of Israel, and will be completely fulfilled when Christ returns to reign over a disciplined and regenerated nation as King (Jeremiah 3:17).

The fact that God will fulfil His promise in regard to so disobedient a people, shows that complete reliance can be placed on all that He declares. The modern revival of Israel is the guarantee that what God says, He will do.

Moreover, the modern revival of Israel, is the token that the time of the fulfillment of the promise is at hand. Christ shall return to discipline and rule Israel as was promised at his birth (Luke 1:32-33). He shall assume his rightful place as King (John 19:19), and will extend his rule from Jerusalem over all nations (Isaiah 2:2-4). The Jews, humbled by reverses, will finally recognize him as their Messiah, whom they have rejected for so long. In fulfillment of Bible prophecy, at the Lord's return to the earth they will be compelled to "look upon him whom they pierced, and will mourn" their past blindness (Zechariah 12:9-10; 13:6). Circumstances will draw them to God, and in humility, they will reach up to a national greatness such as the nation has never experienced previously. Under the reign of the Lord Jesus, the glory of Solomon's kingdom will be restored and extended to Israel (Acts 1:6). Thus the national aspect of the promise made to Abraham will be fulfilled.

### **Consider The Personal Promise**

The second aspect of the promise made to Abraham, referred to his personal elevation: his name will be great in all the earth. That is not the case today; for millions are in ignorance of Abraham. The time is coming, however, when he will be honored throughout the earth. Christ spoke of this when he declared: "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28).

These men, together with all those who walk in their footsteps, will comprise a new aristocracy of immortals in the age to come. They

will "live and reign with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). Abraham will be pre-eminent among them; great in all the earth. This is the second turn of the key that unlocks the Bible message. You can share that glory with faithful Abraham, by a resurrection from the dead to life eternal.

### **Consider The Family Promise**

God also promised Abraham that He would bless those who blessed Abraham, and would curse those who curse him. History reveals an amazing partial fulfillment of this. It is a remarkable fact, that those nations which have cursed the Jew have declined; whereas those that have assisted him have prospered. The Babylonians destroyed the Jewish State and took the people into captivity in B.C. 606, but seventy years later, Babylon fell. Rome humiliated the Jewish people; but its mighty empire declined. Imperialistic Russia brutally persecuted the Jews, but was overwhelmed in an orgy of blood in the Russian Revolution. Hitler assassinated six million Jews in his concentration camps, but where is Nazi Germany today? His merciless persecution drove Jewish scientists and doctors to seek refuge in the countries of his enemies, where their ability and skill contributed to his defeat. It was a Jewish refugee scientist who played a large part in evolving the atomic bomb that secured victory for the allies.

On the other hand, nations that have helped the Jew have prospered. Britain and America are cases in point. When Britain favored Israel, she rose in the scale of nations; when she reversed this policy, she declined. The same is true of the U.S.A. A policy of consideration and toleration towards the Jew has never hindered the progress of any nation.

This is not mere co-incidence: it is in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

But the full scope of this clause of the promise is found in the destiny of those who embrace the promises made to Abraham as a

matter of personal hope. They bless him above all others. Who are they? The Bible teaches: "They that are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). They form part of the great family of Christ, to be blessed in conjunction with Abraham whom they bless. Hence this clause of the promise, comprises an assurance to the family of Abraham.

And remember, you can become a member of that "family" by belief in the gospel followed by baptism into Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-29).

### **Consider The International Promise**

Abraham was also promised that in him "all families of the earth will be blessed." According to Paul, these words constitute the Gospel message (see Galatians 3:8). But as yet they have not been fulfilled. The nations are not blessed so long as violence, crime and wickedness stalk the earth; whilst pollution destroys cities, and the threat of annihilation faces humanity. However, God proposes to rid the earth of these conditions. He has declared: "As truly as I live the whole earth shall be filled with My glory" (Numbers 14:21).

This will be brought about by the establishment of God's reign on earth through Christ Jesus. He will return for that purpose. Christ taught this when he traveled throughout Judea preaching the coming Kingdom of God on earth. At his birth angels sang of this, saying:

"Glory to God in the highest; UPON EARTH PEACE AND GOODWILL towards men."

He taught his Apostles to pray:

"Thy kingdom come, that THY WILL MAY BE DONE IN EARTH AS IT IN HEAVEN."

His second coming formed the basis of their preaching. They proclaimed:

"Times of refreshing shall come from THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD; for He shall send Jesus Christ whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution (restoration) which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets" (Acts 3:19-21).

The Bible proclaims that Christ will return to reign on earth. Though it predicts troublous times preceding his coming (such as we experience today), it clearly speaks of the establishment of God's kingdom which will bring blessings to all nations (see Dan. 2:44; Psalm 72; Isaiah 61:11; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Revelation 11:15).

The Gospel, therefore, is the ultimate of all Bible prophecy. It speaks of a coming epoch of blessedness on earth, when such prophecies as the following will be fulfilled:

"The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44).

"He shall cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations (Isaiah 61:11).

"The Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9).

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

"He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, on the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

### **Promise Of Individual Redemption**

Abraham was given these promises, on condition that he give his life to God in the way appointed (Genesis 12:1-2). We, too, can become associated with them by giving ourselves to Christ through a knowledge of God's purpose and baptism (Galatians 3:26-29).

Abraham had to separate himself from his former way of life, and go forth "into a land that God would show him." He did so,

entering Palestine with Lot his nephew. There they prospered; so much so, that some difficulty was found in obtaining sufficient pasture for their combined and growing flocks and herds. This led to dissension, and Lot, drawn away by the seductive, evil influence of Sodom, separated himself from Abraham (Gen. 13).

Abraham, however, remained faithful to the call of God.

His action brought forth further assurances of future well-being from God. Abraham was told:

"Look from the place where thou art, northward, southward, eastward and westward; for all the land WHICH THOU SEEST, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed FOR EVER ... Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13:14-17).

Notice what Abraham was promised, and where he was told to look for it. He was promised an everlasting inheritance UPON THE EARTH. He was told to view the land north, south, east and west; and to walk upon it. The only place where Abraham was not told to look was skywards; and yet, with that strange perversity which is typical of human nature, it is in that direction that man persists in looking. Nowhere in the Bible is it taught that heaven is the reward of the righteous. On the contrary it teaches that "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5), and that "no man hath ascended into heaven (John 3:13).

Abraham never received the promised inheritance in his lifetime. Four hundred years after his death, God declared to Moses:

"I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . . and I have also established My covenant with them, TO GIVE UNTO THEM THE LAND OF CANAAN, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers" (Exodus 6:3-4).

There is no doubt which land was promised the faithful, nor the time when it will be received. It is "the land of Canaan, the land of

their pilgrimage" that they are to receive. Four hundred years after their death, God used the future tense in regard to His intentions: "I WILL GIVE THEM the land."

How are they to receive it? The answer is, by a resurrection from the dead: the hope of all the worthies of old. Consider the following statements:

"God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave" (Psalm 49:15).

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Isaiah 26:19).

"Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ... Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

The Bible clearly teaches that man is mortal, and that death is a state of unconsciousness: "The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). The hope of the Bible is in a resurrection unto life eternal, to be enjoyed upon this earth at the second advent of Christ. Christ taught:

"Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14).

That was the hope set before faithful Abraham, when God promised that He would give him the land "for ever."

### **True Christianity Associated With Abraham's Faith**

Abraham never received that land in his lifetime, but looked for it as a matter of hope (see Hebrews 11:13). Nearly 2,000 years after the death of Abraham, Stephen, the first Christian martyr, made that a foundation of his belief. He was called upon to defend his belief before the Jews (Acts 7), and based his defense on the promises made to Abraham. He told how Abraham had received a

call, went down into Palestine (as Israel was then called), and there received the promises. He declared:

"Abraham removed him into this land (Palestine) wherein ye (Jews) 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" (Acts 7:1-5).

Stephen thus taught that though God had promised Abraham an everlasting inheritance upon earth, during his lifetime he never received "so much as to set his foot on." In fact, the record shows that Abraham had to bargain with the local inhabitants to purchase sufficient land to possess a burial place (Gen. 23:4,13).

Concerning Abraham, and those like him, Paul wrote:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

They were "strangers and pilgrims" because they looked for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

That was the belief of all New Testament Christians. They looked for a resurrection to life eternal, and an abiding inheritance on earth. Paul declared:

"Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6).

"I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers (Abraham, Isaac, etc.); unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night hope to come" (Acts 26:67).

To show what those promises related to, he boldly declared:

"WHY SHOULD IT BE THOUGHT A THING INCREDIBLE WITH YOU THAT GOD SHOULD RAISE THE DEAD?"

The Apostle recognized that the promise of God to Abraham involved a resurrection from the dead unto life eternal, and a permanent inheritance upon the earth. That, indeed, is the basic hope of the Bible (see Matthew 19:27-29; Romans 2:6-7; Philippians 3:20-21).

But what has that to do with us? A great deal in every way. Notice that the promise was made to "Abraham and his seed" (Gen. 13:15).

Who constitutes the seed of Abraham in the terms of that promise? Let the Bible answer:

"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. .. and if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE" (Galatians 3:26-29).

In other words, if we are truly Christ's then we are heirs to the promise made to Abraham: we, too, are in hope of a resurrection from the dead to life eternal on earth!

However, if we do not understand the promises made to Abraham, or if we do not believe them, how can we claim to be his seed?

And certainly, Abraham knew nothing of the alleged immortality of the soul, or the hope of heaven as a reward. He was promised the earth and immortality of body (see Romans 4:13).

Thus the matters relating to Abraham can vitally affect us.

We become Christ's by embracing the faith (note Galatians 3:26), by coming to a sound knowledge of the Truth in him, and submitting to baptism (John 17:3; Mark 16:16).

**The World To Be Made Subject To Abraham's Son**

We hope that these facts will quicken your interest in Abraham, and cause you to read for yourself the record of his life and faith in Genesis 12 to 22.

Genesis 22 records a great test of faith that God imposed upon this man. A son had been born unto him by name of Isaac, concerning whom it was told him: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12).

When this lad was about the age of 17, Abraham was told to offer him up for a burnt offering upon a mountain chosen of God (Genesis 22:2). This was a tremendous trial of faith, but Abraham proved equal to it. He had implicit faith in God, and realized that the promises must be fulfilled through Isaac. He reasoned that even if he did offer him for a burnt offering unto God, God would have to restore him again to make good His word. Abraham recognized that he was under test and accepted it as a challenge. Paul comments:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:17-19).

These words describe Abraham's confidence in the resurrection. He accepted the challenge of God, trusting His word, knowing that whatever happened God's promises guaranteed the future of Isaac if he proved faithful. His confidence was expressed to the two attendants whom he took with him, and whom he left at the foot of the mount upon which the drama was enacted. "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and (according to the Hebrew) WE WILL COME AGAIN TO YOU," he told them (Genesis 22:5).

On the mount above, the altar was set up, and Isaac was placed thereon. Then, full of faith, Abraham took the knife in his hands to slay his son. At that moment God intervened. Abraham was told:

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me" (v. 12).

His attention was drawn to a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. Instead of Isaac, this ram became the sacrificial offering. Thus Isaac was (to use the words of Scripture) "in a figure raised from the dead" through the sacrifice of God's providing.

The place was named YAHWEH YIREH, which signifies "The Lord will provide," for Abraham recognized in those events a type of the offering of the Lamb of God for the sin of the world, the provision that God would make for the redemption of mankind. God provided the Lord Jesus for that purpose. Christ proclaimed himself to be the "resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). As the Redeemer of mankind, he made possible the ultimate resurrection of Abraham and all similar men and women of faith.

A careful reading of Genesis 22 reveals that the angel who conveyed God's message to Abraham, spoke to him twice (v. 15). The first message directed his attention to the ram caught in the thicket, and instructed him to offer that instead of his son. It directed Abraham's attention to matters that typified the work of the Lord Jesus at his first advent, when he was offered on Mount Calvary as "the Lamb of God for the sin of the World." The second proclamation, however, spoke of the coming glory of the Lord Jesus, and the ultimate blessing of Abraham, to be effected at the second advent of Christ. God declared through the angel:

"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 heaven, and the sand on 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" (vv. 16-18).

There is no greater declaration than this found within the pages of the Bible. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord"; and Paul, commenting on this says that it is impossible that God should lie (Hebrews 6:17-18). Its fulfillment is beyond all doubt.

### **How Christ Is Related To The Promises**

Christ was born to establish this covenant (Luke 1:55,68-74); he died to confirm it (Romans 15:18); he rose from the dead to fulfil it (Romans 4:25).

The promise provides for a multitudinous seed of Abraham as "the stars of heaven, and the sand upon the shore." Paul shows in Galatians 3:26 that the "seed" referred to those who accept the faith of Abraham and are baptized into Christ, thus becoming "heirs of the promise." When Abraham stands again in life upon the earth, at the resurrection, he will find that his spiritual progeny extends to many thousands of faithful ones throughout the ages, who have manifested similar characteristics of belief, faith and trust as did he. Together with them he will reap the reward of immortality, and an eternal inheritance of the earth (cp. Romans 4:13). For that reason, he is styled in Scriptures, "the father of the faithful," the "heir of the world."

The promise of Genesis 22:16-18 also speaks of an individual, a special seed of Abraham who shall "possess the gate of his enemies." ["His" indicates that "seed" is in the singular number. If it were plural the pronoun would be "their."] Scripture does not leave us in any doubt as to whom this refers. Paul taught:

"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

Christ shall "possess the gate of his enemies." This is a figure of speech denoting complete power and dominion over one's enemies. Christ is to return (Acts 1:11), to raise from the dead and reward those who are of Abraham's faith, then to "break in pieces the oppressor" (Psalm 72:4), finally to "reign till all enemies are put

under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). As vice-regent for God on earth, he will:

"Set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed; and which shall not be left to other people, but will consume all other nations" (Daniel 2:44).

"Reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the faithful throughout the ages) gloriously" (Isaiah 24:23).

Christ's reign on earth will fulfil the Gospel message, for all nations will be blessed in him. He will destroy international discord, cause war to cease, establish a new order on earth. The golden rule of love will become the rule of society. From Jerusalem, the Metropolis of his kingdom, his righteous laws will extend to all parts of the world, educating and guiding all peoples. At long last, mankind will come to appreciate the wisdom and benefits of his laws, and will turn to him in gratitude and joy. Thus will be fulfilled the Gospel, the glorious "good news of God" for suffering humanity:

"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

This message of the Gospel is the foundation of all teaching in the Bible. It is as a key that will open the door of understanding to its pages. Its glorious hope permits us to look to the future with hope and confidence. It provides a sound purpose to life, as we look beyond to the ultimate purpose of God. Meanwhile, it enables us to discern the hand of God in present events, guiding the destiny of the nations; the modern revival of Israel, the growing power of

Russia, the developing world crises. With the Gospel in mind, we can view these events with understanding and without fear.

Apart from it there is no hope, and we are found "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:11-12). The Bible clearly shows that blind ignorance alienates us from the life that God offers man through the Gospel. That was the express teaching of Paul (Ephesians 4:18). Therefore, some action on our part is necessary if we would gain the benefits of the Gospel. Abraham had to act in faith; we must do likewise.

Otherwise, we are of all men most miserable (1 Cor. 15:19). An understanding of the teaching of the Bible imposes a challenge. It demands that we do something about it. It is wonderful to know that God has a purpose with the earth; it is exciting to contemplate the prophecies of Christ's second coming, and the glory of the Kingdom he will establish. But there is no guarantee that we shall participate in those events unless we act as Abraham did. Only those who embrace the hope of Abraham, and walk in his steps, becoming heirs of the promises by baptism into Christ, will receive the inheritance held out by God.

What does that involve? Firstly, an understanding of the saving truth of the Gospel (Romans 1:16; John 17:3), then baptism into his name (Acts 2:38); finally a walk in faith. Christ commissioned the Apostles:

"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel; he that BELIEVETH (1st step), and is BAPTISED (2nd step) shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Belief, baptism, obedience are the three steps to salvation. Your personal destiny, reader, is bound up in what you do in regard to the message of the Bible.

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## **HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Incident</b>
70	Arrival at Haran from Ur of the Chaldees., Gen. 11:31
75	The call from God. 12:1-4
	Four-fold promises offered on conditions.
	Arrival in Canaan. 12:5
	God's promise of Canaan to Abraham's seed. 12:7
	Abraham builds Altar at Bethel. 12:8
	The sojourn in Egypt. 12:10-20
	The return to Bethel, and the separation from Lot. 13:1-12
	God's reiteration of His promise to Abraham, and the Patriarch's settlement in Hebron. 13:14-18
	Abraham routs invading coalition. 14:1-16
80	Abraham receives the blessing of Melchizedek: Priest of Most High God. 14:17-24
	The Covenant between God and Abraham. 15
85	Flight of Hagar and the birth of Ishmael. 16
99	The Covenant of Circumcision. 17
	Abraham's intercession at Sodom and Gomorrah 18
	Destruction of the Cities of the Plain. 19
	The sojourn at Gerar and confrontation with Abimelech. 20
100	The birth of Isaac. 21:1-5
	The casting out of Ishmael. 21:8-16
	Abraham's covenant with Abimelech. 21:22-34
125	The Offering of Isaac. 22:1-14
	Confirmation and extension of promises through works of faith. 22:15-18
137	The death of Sarah and purchase of the Cave of Machpelah. 23
140	Abraham finds a wife for Isaac, and the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. 24
	Abraham's marriage to Keturah. 25:1-4
175	Death and burial of Abraham. 25:7-9

The promises made to Abraham comprise the basis of the Gospel (Gal. 3:8), confirmed by the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 15:8). They ensure the resurrection to life eternal of Abraham and all who follow his example of faith (see Galatians 3:26-28; Acts 26:7-8). They also provide for vast national and international changes in the earth at the coming of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 1:68-75).