

# STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at [johnny@stoneharborchurch.org](mailto:johnny@stoneharborchurch.org).

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,  
Johnny

## ***Transformation Card***

*This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.*

Date: Feb 14, 2010  
 Series: The Church of God's Intention  
 Part: Part 1 – What God Intends the Church to Be  
 Section: The New People of God  
 Topic: The Church  
 Message Title: How the Church is the New People of God  
 Short Title: The Church, the New People of God  
 Text: Gen 11-25; John 8, Romans 4, Gal 3, Heb 11:6-19  
 Key Words: Abraham, Promise, Covenant, Faith, Jesus, Children of Abraham

### ***Message Outline***

#### Series Setting

The Church of God's Intention  
 Part 1 What God Intends the Church to Be  
 God Intends the Church to Be The New People of God

#### **How the Church is the New People of God**

- I. The First Adam Anticipates the Last Adam
- II. Noah & His Family Anticipate Jesus & His Disciples
- III. Abraham & His Descendents Anticipate the New Community of Faith
- IV. Old Testament Israel Anticipates the New Testament Church

#### ***Related Scripture***

1. Gen 11-13
2. Gen 14-16
3. Gen 17-19
4. Gen 20-22
5. Gen 23-25
6. John 8, Ro 4, Gal 3
7. Heb 11:6-19

#### ***Questions for Thought and Discussion***

1. How do God's dealings with His people in the Old Testament help us understand Him and His dealings with us in the church today?
2. Answer the above with respect to Abraham?
3. Who were the covenant people of God in Abraham's day? (See Gen 17)
4. Who were they in Jesus day? (See John 8, Ro 4, Gal 3)
5. In what way has God advanced the scope of His people from the days of Abraham to the days of Jesus?
6. How are you to be considered a child of Abraham?

#### ***Memory and Meditation Verse***

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 1 Peter 2:9-10 NASB

### ***(3) Abraham & His Descendents Anticipate the New Community of Faith***

#### **(a) Similarities**

##### **(i) God's Dealing with Abraham and His Seed/Descendents**

###### *(a) 'Shouldn't Miss' Observations*

God's Determination – We have already seen in this series that God deals with His people according to His own determination and that determination seems to frequently involve His choosing of one man to first work with and then through to the rest of humanity. Regarding God as determiner we are reminded that: It was God who first purposed and then God who first created according to His purpose and then God first mandated to mankind how he was to live and God who first chose to dwell in His creation with mankind.

Even though we typically live with an egocentric perception of reality, the true reality is Theo-centric, i.e., God centered. He is the pre-existing, purposing, creating one and we, as truly valuable as we are being created by Him in His image, are the but created responders to Him.

That God is the determiner and man is responder is seen again in the life of Abraham. As the reading of Gen 12 shows, God first moved toward Abraham with His plan... **God called Abraham** out of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 12:1-3) charging him to leave his homeland and go into a land that He would show him and then promising him to bless him and all the families of the earth through him.

Abraham's Response of Faith and Obedience – Abraham did what God told him to do even though it required sacrifice (leaving behind all that was know and familiar and had served him well up until that time) and an adventure into the unknown – he was to go to a land God would show him somewhere along the way.

Husbands try that one in your home. "Hun, were moving, God said we should go."

“Go? Go where?”

“God didn't say where, but He said He'd show us along the way.”

So Abraham exercised both considerable faith in God and considerable leadership skills as the Scripture bears out that he succeeded in bringing his wife Sarai/Sarah and nephew Lot with him on this adventure into the unknown – this response of faith in God.

We are off to a good start in the life of Abraham in regards to his relationship with God – God is being God directing Abraham's life according to God's plans; and Abraham is letting God be God hearing Him and actually heeding Him. We have, therefore, in Abram already, as his story just begins, an example of how life in the fallen world (which God is in the process of redeeming) should be. We see hints of a rebuilding of the KOG He had intended – a kingdom ruled by men in communion with God for God. We see this in Abraham's being a devoted son exercising faith working itself out in obedience submitting to the wisdom of God. This all takes us...

*(b) A Little Deeper into the Meaning of the Scriptures*

This promise of God's to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 is a huge promise! Unless you have it memorized, turn with me to Gen 12:1-3. Stacey read it for us. We read it again now with no thought in my mind that this would be boring repetition. Rather, this is the second sip of a glass of cool water that taken in will cause you to never thirst again (John 4).

[Read Gen 12:1-3]

This is the gospel in promise that Jesus was in fulfillment. Paul the apostle says...

- [Galatians 3:8](#) -- The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

Do you recognize the sound of that? Check your cross references in your Bibles. This is the promise of God from Gen 12:3 that God repeated in 22:18

- [Genesis 12:3](#)  
And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."
- [Genesis 22:18](#) -- "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Let the elements of God's promised blessing to Abraham sink in:

- God would get him to a land that He would "show" him as he went
- God would make him a great nation
- God would bless him
- God would make his name great
- Equipped with these promises God would use him to be a blessing
  - God would bless those who blessed him
  - God would curse those who cursed him
  - God would bless all the families of the earth in him

God's promise to Abraham is global in scope and grand in plan. There is more to it than a one time read affords us. Pastor Kit Culver helps us see the significance of this, "...God's promise to Abram of worldwide blessing carried forward His charge to Adam in Eden (and reiterated to Noah) to multiply and fill the earth [Gen 1:28; 9:1,7], thereby making His presence and glory universally known." (SS p. 34) We have here God promising to bring about His purposes for creation in spite of man's fallen state, by blessing the man Abram and the rest of the families of the earth "in him" i.e., somehow in their association with him.

This is big, broad and admittedly general and not yet clearly defined.

It will serve us well to elevate the significance of this promise (Gen 12:1-3) and its relation to the creational mandate (Gen 1:26-28, 9:1-2) we have

already considered. This is foundationally important. Let's set this in our understanding like steel re-bar in the foundation of our building project. God's charge to fill the earth was not just a charge to have a whole bunch of kids. It implied having a whole bunch of kids who would live according to **God's intention**. And what was God's intention for the people He created in the first place? God's intention is that people, created in the His image, living in intimate communion with Him, in a relationship defined by mutual love, would exercise dominion and thereby glorify Him. How? They would glorify Him by living their lives according to His design thereby causing others to know Him, i.e., to recognize Him as He is. The blessing is knowing God! The mission is filling the earth with the knowledge of God.<sup>1</sup>

This brings to my mind Jesus' words to His disciples in [Matthew 5:16](#): "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Our living our lives as the redeemed of Christ transformed into the people of His design causes others to know God and thereby glorify Him.

This was God's purpose before creation and in creation as expressed in Adam and Eve, tarnished by the fall, re-mandated to Noah (Gen 9:1-2,7) and now here carried forward in the life of Abraham.

The prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk would later speak to this taking place in an ultimate way:

- [Isaiah 11:9](#) – "They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, **For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.**"
- [Habakkuk 2:14](#) – "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea."

*(c) God's Plans Advanced*

The story of God initially fulfilling the temporal earthly aspects of this promise to Abram unfolds quickly in Scripture (Gen 12:5b-7a)

With Abram responding to God in faith and obedience, God brought him to land of Canaan and notably “appeared” (7a) to him and promised to give the land he had traveled to. This land was promised him and to his descendants even though “the Canaanite was then in the land.” (7b)

In response to God's appearing and His promise of land to him and his descendants Abram “built an altar there to the Lord...” (7c) Alexander sees this altar as an early step in restoring the garden-temple that was Eden but which was lost in the fall. Abraham would later build another altar on Mt. Moriah for the offering of Isaac. A story we won't have time to unpack today but I've included in your devotional reading for the week. Another step in rebuilding the garden-temple, the dwelling place of God with man, would come later in the construction of the tabernacle and yet another step in the construction of Solomon's temple – which notably was built on the same mount where Abraham offered Isaac (2 Chron 3:1). God seems determined to make for Himself a dwelling place with man and we will see his efforts progress, from the temple, to the incarnation of Christ, to Christ and His church, and ultimately the final restoration of the sanctuary of God is found in the new heaven and new earth of Rev 21 and 22 when the whole redeemed creation will become His sanctuary. But that is the end of the story. Let's get back to Abraham.

### **God Clarified and Formalized His Promised Blessings in a Covenant**

Gen 13:12-18

Re: Land Promise -- God brought Abraham to Canaan and “showed” him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.” (Gen 13:14b-15)

Re: Descendants -- God promised to give Abraham innumerable descendants, “as the dust of the earth...” (16) Remediating Abraham's uncertainty as to how God was going to make a great nation out of him (Gen 12:2) when he didn't even have any kids, God clarified that one would come forth from his

own body (15:4) (as opposed to a servant born in his house but not from him) and that one would be his heir and by implication the recipient of God's blessings.

Gen 15:5 -- God adds to the dust imagery and now gives Abraham the stars of the sky as the count for the number of his descendants. Here again we note what is becoming Abraham's trademark response of faith: "Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." (15:6)

In response to Abraham's "how may I know that I will possess" the land according to the promise made and now clarified and reaffirmed again (15:7), God made an official covenant with him (9-21, esp. 18)

Then to seal the deal they did what folks in the Ancient Near East did in those days when they were making a formal covenant. Abraham in a sense signed the contract by sacrificing animals, and God in His time added His divine signature using a flaming torch which passed between the pieces of the animals sacrificed by Abraham.

The outcome of this activity is summarized in Gen 15:18...

[read 18]

Both descendents and land are named in this summary and it is a way-big land grant which God promises. By my rough assessment that covers a good chunk of modern North-East Egypt, probably all of Jordan, the northern part of Saudi Arabia, 2/3 of Iraq, maybe Kuwait, and possibly some of Lebanon and Syria too. No wonder there is some tension in those parts still today.

It makes critical the understanding of God's intention regarding the land He promised. Was it God's intention to give real-estate to Abraham or did the land promised speak to a reality beyond dirt? We have people in this room who hold differing views but share the same Lord. What do we do with our differences? In love for God and each other and in humility before Him and with the



attitude of the learner we move towards truth sharpening each other by helping each other let go of misunderstandings and grab hold of truth rightly understood.

God further Clarified His Covenant Promises & Instituted the Rite of Circumcision

- Gen 17:7 God further clarified that His Promise/Covenant was to be an everlasting covenant between God and Abraham and his descendents. "I will be their God." Right on the heels of this promise...
- God included an obligation for the parties of the covenant to abide by – Circumcision. Circumcision physically marked who was a covenant son and therefore recipient of God's blessings. The son not circumcised was not a party to God's covenant and His blessing. (Gen 17:14) The person who was circumcised, irregardless of biological descent (17:9-14), was included in the covenant and would be the recipient of God's blessing.
- Also in Gen 17 God clarified that it was Abraham's barren aged wife Sarah (16) who would bear him the son that He had promised and further that his name would be Isaac.
- Gen 21 records that, in a miracle of life out of the deadness of Sarah's womb, Isaac was born as God had promised.

We have been looking at God's dealings with Abraham and the OT POG associated with Him in order to understand God and His dealings with the church, the new people of God.

### **(ii) God's Dealing with Jesus & His New Community of Faith**

Abraham does not slip into the oblivion in the NT. Rather he is mentioned in all 4 gospels (~30), Acts (8), Romans (9), 2 Cor (1), Gal (8), Heb (10), James (2), 1 Peter (1)

Just as God worked through the one man Abraham in his day, He chose to work in an ultimate way through the one man Jesus Christ. As noble and exemplary a man of faith as Abraham was he was not God's anointed one who would reverse the curse, rather He was the patriarchal father of the people of God from whom that Messiah would come. The

genealogies of Jesus (Mat 1:1 and Lk 3:34) indicate clearly that Jesus was born in the line of Abraham. Paul says in [Galatians 3:16](#), “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.” Paul here clearly indicates Jesus Christ is the singular descendant/seed of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3). It was in the one son of Abraham was also the unique Son of God by His incarnation that all the families of the earth could and will be blessed.

When I look at the life of Abraham I see a sketch of the community of faith which would be fulfilled by the church of Jesus Christ. In Abraham's day we have seen that God regarded the circumcised members of Abraham's household as His covenant sons and heirs of His promises. In Jesus day, God regards the baptized members of the church of Jesus as His ultimate covenant sons and the heirs of His promises. What Abraham and those associated with Him by circumcision received in promise, those associated with Jesus by faith received in fulfillment.

But the promise remains unchanged and the recipients of that promise are still considered descendants of Abraham. Gal 3:29 says, “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.”

### **(b) Progression**

#### **(i) From OT Part to NT Full**

Abraham was called out to a land where he could worship God via mediated distance of altar. God appeared to Abraham but He was not with him and his descendants to the degree that He is with Jesus and the church today. Each member of the church has been called by God into a relationship with God not dependent on being in a certain land where God dwells and not requiring an altar or a tabernacle or a temple built of stones in order to meet with God, but being ourselves in union with Jesus the ultimate temple of the Holy Spirit -- who does not appear from time to time but who indwells each believer wherever they are in the world as an ever-present reality through the agency of His Spirit. That is quite a progression.

Abraham received the promise of God that all families of the earth would be blessed in him. Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise. It was initially given to Abraham and Jesus

is Himself the Abrahamic seed who has blessed and is blessing all families on the earth. How so? God is calling people from every nation to Himself through faith in Jesus. Jesus ultimately makes God known.

Inclusion in the covenant family of Abraham was in his day a matter of biology and circumcision. It is now purely a matter of faith in Jesus. The Jewish religious elite of Jesus day considered themselves children of Abraham but Jesus corrected them. In Mat 3 John the Baptist was preaching and people were coming to be baptized. Verse 7 reads, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham." So in the NT we see a clarification that it is not about biology but belief, it is not about a position awarded by man, but calling from God, it is not about office regardless of the fruit of one's life, but about genuine faith leading to genuine repentance. These are the things that make one a child of Abraham.

See also Gal 6:16 where the objects of God's blessing of peace and mercy are seen not as biological descendents of Abraham but as those who "walk by this rule".

Most concisely, Gal 3:7 says, "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham."

Similarly, Phil 3:3 says, "for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh"

So we are children of Abraham but we are that not by blood but by a life of faith. (See also Ro 9:6 in regards to being considered a part of Israel)

### (c) Action

**If we are to be the church of God's intention... We must recognize that God has called us out** of our original situation and we are His people only as we respond in faith -- as Abraham responded to God in faith at several key times in his life.

**If we are to be the church of God's intention... We must understand what God promised to Abraham.** Why? Because the church is the bride of Christ, His redeemed, and who Jesus is and what Jesus has done fulfills God's promise to Abraham. If we don't understand God's promise to Abraham we have an anemic understanding of what He has brought about in Jesus and really who we are and how God views us.

Jesus has not come as some new plan of God but as the fulfillment of His plan from the very beginning (Gen 3:15); a plan that has been made more clear in the life of Abraham.

Think of a plant and its growth above ground. Should the gardener only focus on what he or she can see above the ground without respect for the roots underneath the ground their understanding would be incomplete. If we are talking about a weed that is to be removed and the surface-focused gardener simply lops off its top, that weed will return, perhaps even stronger. If we are talking about a fruit tree that we are hoping will yield a harvest and the surfaced-focused gardener neglects fertilizing and watering the roots, the harvest will be less robust. Likewise, if we are surface-focused Christians neglecting the roots of our faith, we will similarly have a suboptimal understanding of God, and the richness He has for us will be depreciated.

**If we are to be the church of God's intention...**

**We must recognize ourselves as Sons of Abraham** by faith and heirs of God's covenant promises to Abraham as fulfilled in Christ. Not sons of Abraham by virtue of the physical rite of circumcision, but by virtue of the spiritual circumcision of the heart which is a repentance and faith which properly understands Jesus as the promised seed of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed.

**If we are to be the church of God's intention...**

**We must recognize that the huge promise God made to Abram IS ONE AND THE SAME WITH HIS PROMISE TO US AS SONS OF ABRAHAM BY FAITH!** God has the blessing of knowing Him and being His adopted sons and daughters and as such the vehicles of His blessing to all the families of the earth... God has this blessing for you!

As you live your lives authentically as new creatures joined by the faith of Abraham and the circumcision of your hearts with Christ, in Christ you are the recipients of God's blessing upon Abraham spoken to him in promise, realized in you.

How can I say this more clearly so that you would understand? You are individually and we are collectively sons and daughters of Abraham and heirs of the promises of God and stewards of the Gospel first preached to Abraham and ultimately personified in Christ Jesus. We are the second volume of the book of Acts currently being written. The church is the NPOG the ultimate sons of Abraham comprised of Jews and Gentiles without distinction of biological ancestry and only distinguished by the saving grace of

God extended to us in Christ. We are the blessed of God! And we are those in our union with Christ through whom He will bless all the families of the earth.

How can we but radically alter our lives and be the church of God's intention, the church that lives as the church, and is the fragrance of God (2 Cor 2:15) unto the salvation of all who are yet to be built alongside us as we are already built alongside the living Stone who is Jesus (1 Peter 2:4-5)?

Lord what must we do to be this church, Your church, the church You have always intended?

We must let go of however we see ourselves that is not how God sees us! Do we see ourselves as the most important thing in our life? Most of us do. We need to let that go! It is not about us. It is about God, and His relationship with us and through us to others. Do we see ourselves as the one who must manipulate the affairs of our life to secure the best life we can possibly have? We need to let that go. What a ludicrous thought that the created can turn a deaf ear to the Creator and be so arrogant as to set off to the east to secure a happiness of our own design when God has called us to the west to secure our greater joy in Him. Forgive me Lord for setting the agenda for my day and the 5 year plan for my life without first listening to You. You catch the drift. What must you let go of so that your hands and your heart and your mind and your passion can grab a hold of God and the purposes for which He has already grabbed hold of you? Identify you self-centered thinking and let it go!

Then, let's each and together as a church grab hold of our new identity as the bride of Christ and sons of Abraham, heirs of the promises of God, stewards of the mandate to be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it and in so doing make Him known as He is – God, triune, creating, loving, redeeming God who carries in sending Jesus again for those without the hope of this gospel – that they might have it proclaimed by us. This is not the gospel grasped or explained in five minutes costing us little. It is the gospel grasped over a lifetime of careful attention to the word of God and costing us our very lives as we formerly knew them. Lives that are still full of activities that pale in comparison to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ and being in intimate communion with God for all eternity.

Will you let go of what ever you must in your life and grab hold of the hand of God extended to you in God's promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ? If we are to be the church of God's intention we must!

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