

THE INTERNATIONAL CALL OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 17:5 *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

Genesis 18:18 *Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?*

We mistakenly think that Abraham was a Jew and the father of Israel alone. It comes as a surprise to some that Abraham was a Syrian. “And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous” (Deuteronomy 26:5). Abraham was a Syrian who abandoned his country and ethnic roots because God offered him an infinitely grander vision – to become the father of many nations. In this respect, Abraham was unique – he was the first to do this.

Had he chosen to be a Syrian, the best he could hope to achieve was to be a father of perhaps one Syrian tribe. Thankfully, he chose the vision of God – an international vision. Today, almost one-third of the world’s population trace their ethnic and spiritual roots to Abraham. Today’s message is to remind us all of the vision of Abraham; it was and still is an international vision. The Hebrew word for nations is *goyim*. Jews referred derogatorily to gentiles as *goyim*. They forgot that, leaving Syria, Abraham believed that one day Asians, Europeans, Africans and other nations will call themselves the children of Abraham.

Isaiah 51:1 *Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.*

Isaiah 51:2 *Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.*

God exhorts us to look to our father Abraham. Like Abraham, we should leave our ethnic and other narrow earthly identities and emulate his great example. Abraham willingly chose to be a foreigner so we would not be foreigners in the Kingdom of God. We may be called foreigners in Europe today, but please do not consider it a negative burden – let us from today see this as a privileged status; we are carrying on the work of father Abraham. Because of Abraham, gentiles such as Rahab, Ruth, Zipporah, and countless others became the people of God. “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living

God” (Hosea 1:10). Abraham did not understand the languages of the Canaanites as well as his own native tongue, but he built altars, prayed and trusted in the God who understands all languages. Remember that even the Lord Jesus associated gentiles of faith with the ministry of Abraham. It is no coincidence that the Lord invoked Abraham when he marveled at the extraordinary faith of the Roman centurion.

Matthew 8:10 *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

Matthew 8:11 *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

You who are hearing this message and love father Abraham are counted among the many from the east and west who shall sit down with Abraham in the Kingdom of heaven. To be the child of Abraham is to look outside your ethnicity, country and other man-made limitations and look towards the nations, the *goyim*. At one point, Abraham requested that his servant, Eliezer from Damascus, another Syrian and fellow countryman of Abraham should inherit Abraham’s heritage. God said no because Abraham’s heritage is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is for the whole world, not just one country, Syria.

Genesis 15:2 *And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?*

Genesis 15:4 *And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*

Isaac is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was placed as an offering on Mount Moriah to point to Jesus’ sacrifice for the world. Isaac was not born in Syria, but the Promised Land. Why is it called the Promised Land? Simply because God promised to bless all nations through Abraham in this land – an international promise that was fulfilled through the one seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the same Promised Land on Mount Moriah.

Gal 3:16 *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

Gal 3:27 *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Gal 3:29 *And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

When the Lord Jesus was crucified, Golgotha became the most international place in Israel. “And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Luke 23:38). The promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him was now declared in international languages. Hallelujah! Pilate himself was Roman and there were thousands of pilgrims from the whole world who celebrated Passover in Jerusalem. These same international pilgrims would continue to the day of Pentecost and heard the Lord speak to them in their own native languages. Abraham’s call was truly international and so must our calling also be. In fact, the Lord chided the Jews who claimed to be the children of Abraham but contradicted Abraham in their actions. “They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham” (John 8:39-40). We must pray to be the children of Abraham in our vision also! The Lord also confirmed that Abraham understood and rejoiced in the Lord’s international saving mission.

John 8:56 *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*

What day is the Lord speaking about? To begin with, the day God was manifested in the flesh. Let me remind you that this was also an international birthday – wise men came from the east. Praise God! Abraham also rejoiced to see the Lord crucified and take away the sins of the world. This was also an international observation declared in three major languages of the ancient world, as was previously mentioned. Finally, the Day of Pentecost. This was perhaps the most explicit declaration of the international vision and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ as I taught a few weeks ago. The Lord spoke in the languages of the world, including Arabic, in Jerusalem. The international superseded the national. The Lord Jesus himself took the initiative and spearheaded The Great Commission, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ...” (Matthew 28:19).

Are you and I following the vision of father Abraham? Are we willing to look beyond our ethnic and language affiliations to see many nations come to salvation through Jesus Christ? Often while in India for the Gospel, I sit in taxis that are filled with idols. I become uncomfortable but am reminded of father Abraham’s discomfort while walking up and down the Land of Canaan building altars to God. I do this because I know the Lord will reward me richly with souls baptized in his name and filled with Holy Ghost. How satisfied father Abraham will be when he sits at the banquet table in heaven and sees people from every country, ethnicity and language sitting with him! Let us run with international the vision of Abraham !