

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 16 **‘for he also is a son of Abraham’**

C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

These are brief studies, not
"teachings" or "doctrines".

Volume 1, Study 16

A son of Abraham

Genesis 17:9-14 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant [token], 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. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, [even] which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be [tokenized] in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

17:15,16,19) And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

17:20) And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

17:21-22) But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

17:23) And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

(Gen 17:24-27) And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

Every male of Abraham's house was circumcised on the selfsame day. Circumcision was a token of God's Covenant with Abraham. If the token was rejected then the person was put out of the house and no longer a part of the covenant. Notice that the Covenant was not only for the person of Abraham but also for his 'house' and the 'entire lineage of his house' through the years and down through the ages. Also note that there was a blessing upon Abraham, and by means of Abraham the blessing was upon his 'house'.

25:11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac;

Here the Abrahamic Blessing is passed to and rests upon Isaac. The aspect of the Covenant that is wrapped up in the Blessing does not go to just any person in the house of Abraham; instead it rests upon whomever God bestows it. Though the Blessing affects

those persons of the ‘house’, it only functions by means of the person upon whom God has bestowed it.

Within the Covenant that rests upon the ‘house’ of Abraham there can be other blessings extended, which however is not the same thing as the Covenant Blessing (i.e. the Abrahamic Blessing). For a full explanation of how this works see the chapters about Jacob in God's Hook.

Let me emphasize that the Covenant Blessing rests upon ‘sons of Abraham’ and that the Blessing is to *specific* ‘sons of Abraham’ *chosen by God for it*. Also, by means of the ‘sons of Abraham’ many more people within the ‘house’ of Abraham are blessed.

Zacharias and Elisabeth

Luke 1:5,6) There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

This couple, along with millions of other Israelites, were of the lineage of Abraham, thus they were within the Abrahamic Covenant. Additionally, they were of the family of Aaron and Zacharias was of the Aaron priesthood. Unlike having the riches of Abraham and Isaac, the story of Jesus’ birth is wrapped up amid the poor people of Judea. The only thing noticeably out of the ordinary about this couple is that they in their righteous old age were without children...no son to pass on Zacharias’ name in the priesthood.

Ah, but like Abraham and Sarah, in their righteous old age God would give them a promised son. In these days, God was continuing His Covenant to Abraham regarding the promised Seed and He was doing it by means of the Blessing. Therefore, we see that the Blessing is a function of God’s Intent. It does not *necessarily* carry with it riches to help ‘the son of Abraham’ and other children of the Covenant. Yet, we shall see later that riches are still associated with the Abrahamic Blessing.

1:7-17) And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias [i.e. Elisha], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

See more about God’s *barren women of the Covenant* in God’s Hook.

1:18-23) And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and re-

mained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

The Abrahamic Blessing is in effect in Zacharias' 'house' and this time the Blessing is not about worldly riches; instead it is about heavenly riches, and these riches will affect a great many people in the extended 'house' of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

1:24-27) And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

1:57-62) Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

1:63-67) And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

1:68-75) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

Baby John was born of the Aaron family of priests which is of the tribe of Levi. The house of David was of the tribe of Judah.

1:76-79) And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Paul tells that '**the remission of their sins**' was not included in the Mosaic Covenant, that it is a function of the Abrahamic Covenant by way of Christ Jesus; however, much was included within the Mosaic Covenant including forgiveness of sins.

1:80) And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts [i.e. wildernesses] till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

God is at work. And He is continuing working by means of the Abrahamic Covenant and its Blessing. A prophet was recognized as a prophet until God worked out the prophet's '**shewing unto Israel**'.

Jesus, the son of Abraham

Matthew 1:1) The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The New Testament begins by identifying Jesus Christ as *the son of David*, which has to do with the nation of Israel. Yet, Jesus Christ also is identified as *the son of Abraham*, which has to do with the nation of Israel and the promise to Abraham regarding all the families of the earth.

Following this verse is the lineage from Abraham down through the ages to Jesus.

Luke 3:34) Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor...

Moreover, the Apostle Luke also has ‘the son of Abraham’ in regards to Isaac, but then he proceeds with a lineage from Abraham down to Jesus. There are only three verses in the New Testament that have this phrase ‘son of Abraham’ and the two verses above have to do with Jesus as the ‘son of Abraham’ both in direct words and by means of the lineage from Abraham to Jesus.

Luke 19:9) And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham.

Here is another verse with the phrase ‘son of Abraham’. This verse is in the little story of Zacchaeus climbing a tree to get a better view of Jesus walking by. The reason I say ‘the little story’ is because the modern church considers it to be little more than a little story about a little man who was saved and then began to do good deeds. However, there is a great deal more here than seems to meet the eye. To help clarify what was going on between Jesus and this man we will begin looking at the passage from the end and proceed to the beginning. We see that God the Father was informing Jesus about this man whom Jesus had never met but whom the Father well knew.

19:9-10) And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Let us focus upon ‘**he also is a son of Abraham**’ and what it means within the above context. As we have seen (or perhaps implied) there have been many sons of Abraham, with Jesus being the ultimate son of Abraham. Only in this passage do we see anything of Zacchaeus; he is not mentioned again in all Scripture.

We know that Jesus came within the Promise and Blessing of Abraham to help God's people Israel. Ah, God was also interested in helping His people Israel in other ways and there were many people in Jesus’ day who were very poor, seemingly forgotten by the high class people of the law who were supposed to be helping them because of the law’s commandments.

Zacchaeus was a man whom God had blessed greatly with riches. It is interesting that he was truly hated by the people and that very soon Jesus Christ also would be hated. The Spirit was informing Jesus about this man. Did the Spirit also point out the connection of being ‘sons of Abraham’ and being hated by the people?

Zacchaeus was not a tax collector. He was ‘**the chief among the publicans**’. This means that he was in very high office over the bureaucrats that were assigned by the Romans to conduct business among the people for Rome, ‘**and he was rich**’.

19:8) And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

At this point, in this very new relationship, Zacchaeus recognized his Lord. He may not yet have realized everything that was wrapped up in Jesus being the Messiah, but he knew that Jesus had come from God and that God had pointed him out to Jesus. The Lord

Jesus sat in Zacchaeus' 'house' and stayed the night for a reason ordained of God. Such a 'house' would have been a great house in Jerusalem, likely with a large family and with many servants (such as had been the 'houses' of Daniel and his friends when working for the government of the Persians).

Zacchaeus was not "convicted of sin" in this particular circumstance. In his position as '**chief of the publicans**' he had not directly dealt with the citizens of Judea or Jerusalem. He was not only boss over the publican bureaucrats, but he sat as judge over arguments between bureaucrats and between the Roman government and any bureaucrat (much as did Moses regarding Israel in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula).

Therefore, Zacchaeus was saying to Jesus that he would go over the records of the men that had come before him in judgment; he would review the records and if he had falsely accused anyone, then he would repay them four-fold *out of his own money*, and not out of government money.

But even before doing that, he would be giving half of his goods to the poor. I believe that this man, well before Jesus had met him, had a very real sense that he was chosen by God to be in the Roman government structure (even as Daniel and his friends).

Shortly before Jesus was born, and all through this 'season of Christ's coming', there had been an *expectancy* that God was *in the process of doing something outstanding*. We saw it in the prophecy of Zacharias the priest (consider the rumors going throughout the land). This *expectancy* is emphasized in the chapters of Jesus' birth in God's Hook.

19:3) And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

'...And he sought to see *Jesus who he was*'. This has to do with Zacchaeus wanting to take the measure of the man Jesus because 1) of all that he had heard of Jesus and 2) so as to compare Jesus with many of the great men of his day...because in his position, Zacchaeus hobnobbed even with kings and governors. Whatever Zacchaeus expected to find in Jesus, he found so very much more; and his first instinct was to take out of the great blessing that God had bestowed on him and give it to the poor; and then he would settle any accounts with men under him whom he may have unjustly accused of wrongdoing in their jobs. These things show the spirit of Zacchaeus toward God's people Israel.

The people of Judea thought badly of Zacchaeus, and so do many Christians today as they read of him climbing a tree; but Jesus, by the Spirit, proclaimed '**...forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham**'. Now 'also' means that there were others.

19:1,2,4,5,6) And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

Zacchaeus, in his refined garments, could care less about what anyone might think of him climbing a tree. Perhaps those nearby loudly laughed at him. Surely he had a high office and a reputation to consider. Did this little man from time to time climb trees to see kings and governors? Of course not, for he saw them close up and personal during his everyday business. So why didn't he make some of the people get out of his way so that he could see Jesus close up? It was because without a bodyguard or some soldiers accompanying him the people always took the opportunity to elbow him out of things, which he understood and accepted.

The 'house' of Zacchaeus included his entire extended family and servants who, affected by the character of this man, were likely eager to know about Jesus also. Jesus stopped beneath the tree and ordered (as the higher son of Abraham to a lower son of Abraham) that he be taken to Zacchaeus' 'house' as an honored guest. This wealthy and

high governmental official gleefully obeyed...with all kinds of amazement and insults being verbalized. What a spectacle. I wonder how many people rushed to inform the high governmental enemies of Jesus about this turncoat fool, Zacchaeus.

I expect that here is an honorable man and his house...that, in spite of their being alienated by their people, loved God and the people. And now, being 'found' by Jesus, Zacchaeus' 'house' has found the reason for God's Blessing upon them, and how the Blessing was to be used. They came to such understanding by means of Jesus 'the son of Abraham'...who more than anyone could recognize another 'son of Abraham.

19:7) And when they [i.e. the people] saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

Nicodemus

John 3:1) There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

As already mentioned, the birth of Jesus came by means of and was introduced to the world through the poor...the poor priest Zacharias being part of it. Zacharias *represents the priesthood*, but there were many other folks of the lower classes used by God.

However, some thirty years later during Jesus' ministry we see men of the high classes and/or wealthy individuals; therefore, Nicodemus *represents the Jews' governing body*. In this, then he also had his part in the Promise to Abraham regarding God's Plan of the Ages. And we see him in passages 7:50 and 19:39. God works with His chosen ones... chosen beforehand and within the Promise to Abraham and the Abrahamic Blessing.

3:2) The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

'...we know that thou art a teacher come from God'. Who is the 'we' in the verse? This is very early in Jesus' ministry. In fact, it is Jesus' first ministry trip to Jerusalem. Even so, rulers of the Sanhedrin have had many reports about him. There are at least some Pharisees that believe that Jesus is 'come from God'. Note that Nicodemus makes a distinction, addressing Jesus as teacher and not prophet. The believers among the Pharisees are enthralled with Jesus' teaching "the kingdom of God is at hand". Throughout Israel's history, God often performed miracles through the prophets; but this was seldom the case with 'teachers'. Yet, Jesus was obviously a teacher and performed many miracles, even miracles never before performed in Israel's history.

Therefore, Nicodemus and his friends believe 'no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him'. The people of God who in these days were sensitive to Him sensed that He was working in unusual ways and, being that the Romans were unwelcome to the Promised Land, there was a growing expectation that perhaps this was the time when God would cleanse the Land. The Pharisees who believed with Nicodemus understood that there is no other in these unusual times to compare with Jesus, not even John the Baptist who was still preaching and baptizing up north.

A few years later Zacchaeus will seek out Jesus *to see what kind of man he is*. But here we see Nicodemus (a religious governmental ruler) doing the very same thing, and he is doing it while representing other Pharisees. In the preceding verses we see the multitudes surrounding Jesus. Therefore, Nicodemus comes at night to have a very important interview with Jesus and to study Jesus (i.e. to take his measure like with Zacchaeus) and to take back some answers to the others. Nicodemus is not sneaking around.

3:3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Jesus' main message is 'the kingdom of God is at hand', and Jesus understands that

Nicodemus understands that truly ‘the kingdom of God’ is at hand (i.e. finally something exciting and wonderful is going on). Therefore, Jesus begins his words to Nicodemus by telling him that if a person wants to ‘**see the kingdom of God**’ then a person must ‘**be born again**’ (actually the Greek is ‘**born of above**’).

3:4-7) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh [i.e. ‘of water’] is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Here Jesus switches from technical talk between “religious leaders” to directly address Nicodemus within the very reason for his visit. Above was ‘**see the kingdom of God**’ and here is ‘**enter the kingdom of God**’. In other gospels for the very same passages there is ‘**the kingdom of heaven**’; that is, ‘the kingdom of God’ is ‘the kingdom of heaven’; that is, ‘the kingdom of God’ is *in heaven*...though at times (and certainly at the time of Jesus’ ministry, death, burial, and resurrection) ‘the kingdom of God’ visits the world of men.

When ‘the kingdom of God’ visits earth (as during the time of Jesus), those with an eye to see can ‘**see the kingdom of God**’. But to ‘**enter the kingdom of God**’ is after a person departs man’s world, and we see the requirements in the verse. Jesus continues explaining to this ‘**ruler of the Jews**’. Remember (from other studies) that ‘the Jews’ were keepers of the Mosaic Law and of the holy city Jerusalem.

3:8,9) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be [i.e. come to be, come to pass]?

‘...so is every one that is born of the Spirit’ is the very thing that has drawn Nicodemus and his friends.

Dear reader, this is like a man who is very high up in a denomination and he has witnessed underlings that have *something* (i.e. the Spirit) and he has envied them and he wants this *something* for himself. So it was with Nicodemus and now he sits across from the man who has a ton of it.

3:10) Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Notice that Nicodemus is a ‘**master of Israel**’. He is not a priest, so this is as high in the religious government of Judea as a person can get. See John 7:45-53 where later Nicodemus, in his high office, speaks out in defense of Jesus, basically stating that Pharisees have no (legal within the law) business judging a man without hearing him, which of course Nicodemus has already heard and reported to his small group of Pharisees.

In this verse Jesus (like Paul does later) uses a little sarcasm regarding ‘the Jews’.

3:11) Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know [about the kingdom of God], and testify that we have seen [the kingdom of God]; and ye receive not our witness.

Who is the ‘**we**’ in this verse? Jesus and his disciples have only just come to Jerusalem for the first time. Even as Jesus had said about Zacchaeus (‘**he also is a son of Abraham**’), so there have been others, perhaps many others, in Judea and in Jerusalem who have the Spirit; and it is these who may have inspired Nicodemus to ask for a private visit with Jesus. Perhaps because of his high position Nicodemus has not listened to those who would instruct him regarding the Spirit and the kingdom of God, but here is One to whom he listens and he implores. (Likely Nicodemus has never heard John the Baptist preach.)

3:12) If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Nicodemus is quickly realizing that this One really is different and perhaps he really has come from heaven. Knowing this, then, Jesus verifies that he has come from heaven.

The ‘earthly things’ of which Jesus speaks have to do with the Spirit and those who have the Spirit (see 11), but he senses that Nicodemus is now searching deeper and wanting to understand how the ‘earthly things’ are worked from heaven.

3:13) And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Therefore, Jesus is letting him know that only he (Jesus) is One that has come down from heaven and that all the others who have the Spirit and who work with heavenly things have not been to heaven.

Thus, Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he will only be able to see and experience the kingdom of God when and as the kingdom of God comes down for a brief time to earth. In fact, this is what is implied to Nicodemus about Jesus’ visitation to earth from heaven. In the following verses, Jesus gives Nicodemus a brief summary of why the Father has sent him down to earth...that this is his errand.

3:14-21) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

3:22) After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.



Now, dear reader, we switch briefly to the end of the chapter where John the Baptist is speaking to some of his disciples about Jesus.

3:23-27) And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

John is speaking of the Spirit and of assignments on earth given of heaven to a men.

3:28-30) Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.

3:31) He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

‘...he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth’. That is, an earth-bound person may speak about some heavenly things as taught by the Spirit, but he is limited with ‘earthly’ words to speak of what he has not seen in heaven. Paul tells us, even in his understanding from God, that he yet sees (i.e. understands) as through a dark glass. John infers that a man of the Spirit can only speak of what he knows...of what he has experienced on earth as he continually walks by faith (see Jesus’ words in 10, 11, 12). Such a person works for the One ‘that cometh from above’ who is ‘above’ him.

John is telling his disciples, regarding their desire to be truly spiritual, that while they are earth-bound they will be limited even as John himself is limited...and the One that has come from above has unlimited Spirit...and that **‘this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.’**

3:32-34) And what he [i.e. the One from above] hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his [i.e. God’s] testimony. [However,] He that hath received his [i.e. God’s] testimony hath set to [the testimony] his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent [i.e. the One from above] speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

‘...and no man receiveth his testimony’ is speaking of Christ in heaven before having come to earth in the form of a man, Jesus. That is, only One from heaven could have observed the things of heaven so as to truthfully testify of them on earth; he is the only One that **‘speaketh the words of God’**, having heard them directly from God while in heaven. On earth the seal is set **‘that God is true’** by Christ Jesus as he testified of what he saw and heard while in heaven. (Again check Jesus’ words above.)

Nicodemus had experienced limited evidences of the Spirit in other men, but in Jesus he witnessed the Spirit without measure. John the Baptist also witnessed in Jesus the Spirit without measure as it descended from heaven to take up its abode on Jesus. It is this that John is explaining to his disciples, for he knew that he would decrease while Jesus would increase.

3:35-36) The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John is giving his disciples advice, forewarning them to be seeking out Jesus. He makes clear that Jesus is the **‘Son’** of God whom **‘the Father loveth’**. He wants to make sure that his disciples do not try to stay faithful to him after he has **‘decreased’** and thereby miss out on **‘everlasting’** life. With such advice, then, must come the warning.

Sons of Abraham

Have there always been ‘sons of Abraham’? Yes. Mentioned in the Old Testament, most of them had been in the context of Israel (i.e. most of the prophets were of Israel, though not all, and there were kings that were ‘sons of Abraham’ like David was). In the New Testament Gospels they were usually in the context of Judea. In the New Testament Epistles they were usually in context to the nations as the gospel spread out from Israel.

In the sense of the above study, surely there have been a great many down through the ages of whom we will never know until we see them in heaven. At the time of Jesus, we are aware that God chose disciples for his son, but we also see more than a few men and women chosen of God who were working (in some form or other) for God. In this study we have seen Zacharias and Elisabeth, seemingly ‘found’ by God and by the Spirit, come into the fulfillment of their Abrahamic assignment for God. We have seen Nicodemus and Zacchaeus who were already placed by God in an Abrahamic work and upon being **‘found’** by Jesus their work in the Blessing became even more fruitful for God’s purposes. Jesus ‘came to seek and to save them who were lost’.

We evangelicals have decided that the Biblical words ‘save’ and ‘lost’ can mean only what we have decided that they mean. But when Jesus speaks of seeking out one of his lost sheep, he is speaking of *his sheep*. I hope that the reader will begin to see in scripture that it is about much more than ‘being saved’ or ‘not being saved’.

Add one point, Jesus’ disciples returned and complained that they had seen a man casting out demons in Jesus’ name. Jesus responded, “Leave him alone, he that is not against us is with us.” God’s Plan of the Ages is more inclusive than we can ever imagine. Scripture informs that

Christ Jesus is One among many brethren, the Elder brother of many brethren. Had Christ been inactive before he came as the baby Jesus? Of course not. Christ has always been at work.

We know for sure by Matthew 1:1 that Jesus was (is) **‘the son of Abraham’**. We know by Luke 19:9 that Zacchaeus **‘forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham’**. We began with Zacharias and Elisabeth and there were others during the birth of Jesus which you can read about in the two chapters of the birth in God’s Hook. Though Nicodemus’ story was early in Jesus’ ministry, it was left until last because most Christians can think only of it as about “being saved”.

The passage about Zacchaeus also is considered by most Christians as about “being saved”, but there Jesus states of Zacchaeus, **‘he also is a son of Abraham’**. So I have tried (to some small extent) to open the reader’s mind and heart about what is **‘a son of Abraham’**; but also that many people in the Old and New Testament ages likely were **‘sons of Abraham’**, and about the very many not mentioned in scripture who have been and who are and who will be **‘sons of Abraham’** as God’s Plan of the Ages rolls on to its conclusion.

And pay attention to Jesus’ words about **‘earthly men’** who have had **‘the Spirit’** and who have **‘witnessed the kingdom of God’** when it has come down to earth for a season. Thus it was with Jesus’ days on earth and thusly it has been on many other occasions. Study your Bible and you will find more than a few such occasions. God the Father gave the Spirit to Jesus **‘without measure’**, and He gives the Spirit to men and women (perhaps boys and girls as well) when and to whom He chooses. It is not simply a matter of receiving it by seeking for it, as Paul tells us. We do not know if Nicodemus received the Spirit in that meeting with Jesus, that is we are not told directly; yet, he and Joseph of Arimathea had the privilege of claiming and burying Jesus’ body **‘in the manner of the Jews’** (see John 19:38-42).

Joseph was a **‘disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews’**. We have already seen Nicodemus taking a stand for Jesus when among the Pharisees and now Joseph comes out openly within his authority (likely a wealthy businessman) to approach Pilate for the body. How many **‘sons of Abraham’** were openly active during that time and how many **‘sons of Abraham’** were silent because of fear? How many **‘sons of Abraham’** were **‘lost’**? **‘For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.’** How many were **‘lost’**: not knowing (or realizing) their way until the Shepherd **‘son of Abraham’** found them and set them free from their circumstances and fears to realize who they were, who they served, and who was compassionately calling them to stand up and fulfill their role as **‘sons of Abraham’**.

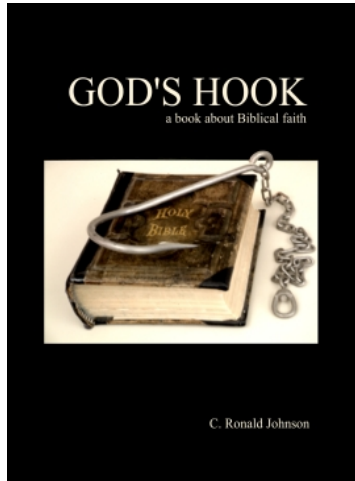
“Being a Christian” is not the same as being ‘a son of Abraham’. “Having received the Spirit” is not being ‘a son of Abraham’ (though they also receive the Spirit). Becoming a ‘son of Abraham’ is not “according to a person’s desire”, for ‘a son of Abraham’ is fore-chosen of God to function in *some role according to God’s Plan of the Ages*. There are other *such roles*. (The things being done by God are higher and deeper than our capacity to comprehend them). Another *such role* is explained in Revelation 19:10.

Consider also Acts 8:26. The Ethiopian Eunuch was not a “lost sinner”. He was a powerful man under Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, and likely he took this trip to Jerusalem often, perhaps every year. (See Zephaniah 3:9-20.) Doesn’t the Acts passage read like Christ Jesus, by means of Philip, has perhaps ‘found’ another ‘son of Abraham’? He is ‘found’ studying the writings of Isaiah. And when the scriptures are opened to him in the fulfillment-light of Jesus Christ he asks to be baptized and goes on his way rejoicing (much like Zacchaeus).

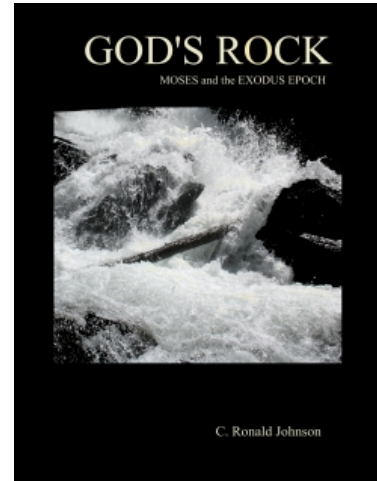
Also consider Acts 9. Saul, I expect, was a **‘son of Abraham’** completely sold out to God...but in his zeal he was mistaking the law, the holy city Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices to be God’s only means of salvation. Literally, Jesus found him on the road to Damascus. Upon being ‘found’ in such a direct-from-heaven manner Saul knows that it is the ‘Lord’ and he offers his complete obedient attention; yet, he does not know which ‘Lord’ because the Voice does not match his knowledge and understanding of Scripture. After identifying Himself as to which ‘Lord’, Jesus gives Saul (**‘a chosen vessel unto me’** verse 15) orders; and Saul is instantly obedient to those orders. As the Father gave (as chosen vessels) the disci-

ples to Jesus, so the Father has given Saul to Jesus, 'a **chosen vessel unto me**'. Saul had not known to whom he belonged until he was 'found' by Jesus.

These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press



a book
about
Biblical
Faith



the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus