

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2004**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB**

Message Five

**The God of Abraham
(4)**

**Being Justified by Faith, Being Circumcised,
Believing in God as the Unique Source,
and Becoming the Father of a Multitude of Nations**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 15:1-6; 17:5-6, 17, 19, 21, 24; 18:14; 21:1-3; Rom. 4:2-5, 17

I. Abraham “believed Jehovah, and He accounted it to him as righteousness”—Gen. 15:6; cf. Gal. 3:6; Rom. 4:2-3:

- A. Believing God was Abraham’s spontaneous reaction to God’s repeated appearing to him; his believing was the springing up within him of the element that God had transfused into him—Acts 7:2; Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17.
- B. God’s reaction to Abraham’s believing was to justify him, that is, to account him as righteous—15:6:
 - 1. Abraham believed God’s word in a definite way, and God counted it to him as righteousness—Rom. 4:2-5.
 - 2. God’s justification is not a reward (wages) for our good works (labor); it is grace freely given to us through Christ’s redemption—3:24.
 - 3. For God to justify Abraham meant that God was happy with Abraham and that Abraham was in harmony with God.
- C. Abraham’s being justified by God was not related to sin; rather, it was for the gaining of a seed to produce a kingdom that will inherit the world—4:3, 13:
 - 1. In Genesis 15:6 Abraham believed that God was able to work something into him to bring forth a seed out of his own being for the fulfillment of God’s purpose—v. 4.
 - 2. Romans 4 indicates that justification is not merely for us to be delivered out of God’s condemnation but even more for God to gain many sons to constitute the Body of Christ as the kingdom of God for the fulfillment of His purpose—8:29-30; 12:4-5; 14:17.

II. “Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin”—Gen. 17:24:

- A. In Genesis 16 Abraham exercised his flesh to produce Ishmael; in Genesis 17 God charged Abraham to cut off his flesh, to terminate his natural strength, so that God could come in and bring forth Isaac by His grace.

- B. Abraham's producing of Ishmael by the exercise of his natural strength was a serious offense against God and His economy—16:1-3, 15-16.
- C. Abraham's producing of Ishmael through Hagar symbolizes man's attempt to fulfill God's purpose by the effort of the flesh in coordination with the law—Gal. 2:16.
- D. The spiritual meaning of circumcision is to put off the flesh, to put off the self and the old man, through the crucifixion of Christ—Col. 2:11, 13a; Phil. 3:3:
 - 1. Spiritual circumcision is the constant application of Christ's death to our flesh—Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13.
 - 2. Circumcision deals with the flesh that tries to do God's will and to fulfill His promise by itself.
 - 3. The meaning of circumcision is to cut off the confidence of the flesh—Phil. 3:3.

III. Abraham believed in God as the unique source, as the One who “calls the things not being as being”—Rom. 4:17:

- A. As the creating God, He needs no material to work with; He can create something out of nothing simply by speaking—Psa. 33:9.
- B. God's goal must be achieved according to God's time and through God's power; this is the principle of Isaac—a principle of God's time and God's power—Gen. 17:17, 19, 21:
 - 1. The birth of Isaac signifies the bringing forth of Christ as the promised seed for the fulfillment of God's purpose through God's work of grace at God's appointed time—21:1-3.
 - 2. The birth of Isaac was the coming of Jehovah, which was the coming of grace; Isaac was born by the strength of God's grace—18:14; John 1:17.
 - 3. The birth of Isaac took place after Abraham was circumcised; without circumcision, there could be no Isaac—Gen. 17:24; 21:1-3.
- C. God did a special work on Abraham in order to show him what it means for God to be the Father—Eph. 4:6:
 - 1. To know God as the Father is to know that He is the source, the unique Initiator, and that everything originates from Him—Matt. 15:13.
 - 2. We all need to know that God is the Father and that everything proceeds from Him—Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:14-16.
 - 3. God wanted Abraham to be a father, yet at the same time, He wanted him to see that he was not the Father—Gen. 17:5-6; Eph. 4:6.

IV. “Your name shall no longer be called Abram, / But your name shall be Abraham; / For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations”—Gen. 17:5:

- A. *Abram* means “exalted father”; *Abraham* means “father of a multitude.”
- B. The changing of Abraham's name, signifying the changing of his being, was for the fulfillment of God's purpose—17:4:
 - 1. In order to fulfill His eternal purpose, God needs not one exalted person but the father of a great multitude—cf. 1:28; 9:1.
 - 2. In spiritual experience, the real changing of a name is the change from “I” to Christ and from “I” to the grace of God—Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:10.