

OLD TESTAMENT GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

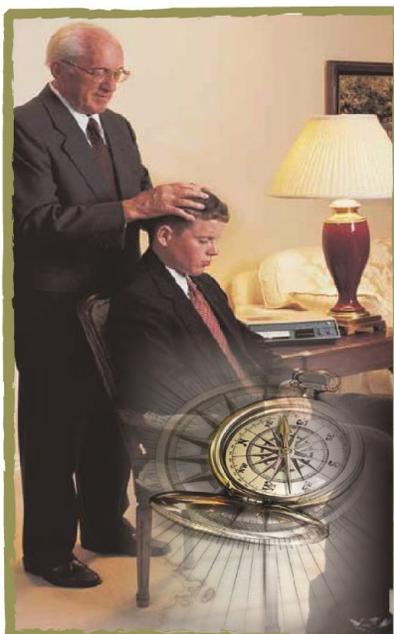
Green Mountain 1st Ward, Lakewood, Colorado

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Lesson 7: The Abrahamic Covenant, Abraham 1:1–4; 2:1–11; Genesis 12:1–8; 17:1–9

Introduction



“Patriarchal blessings [are] an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient, and also, where so moved upon by the Spirit, an inspired and prophetic statement of the life mission of the recipient, together with such blessings, cautions, and admonitions as the patriarch may be prompted to give. ... The realization of all promised blessings is conditioned upon faithfulness to the gospel of our Lord.”

(First Presidency letter to stake presidents, 28 June 1957; quoted in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 558)

When a patriarch declares our lineage, he reveals to us that we are descendants of the prophet Abraham through Ephraim, Manasseh, or another of Abraham’s descendants. This lesson discusses the blessings we can receive and the responsibilities we have as Abraham’s descendants.

Lesson Highlights

- God covenants with Abraham.
- We are heirs to the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant.

God covenants with Abraham.

- Abraham 1:1–4; 2:1–11; and Genesis 12:1–8; 17:1–9.

Abraham 1:2–4. As a young man, Abraham wanted to be obedient and worthy before God. Blessings he sought included ordination in the priesthood, great knowledge, an increased ability to follow righteousness, to be a father of many nations, to be a prince of peace, to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God.

Abraham 2:1–4 show that Abraham and his family were directed to leave their home in Ur and journey to Haran, where they were to settle. There Abraham prayed and received a vision in which God covenanted to bless him and his

posterity. This is called the Abrahamic covenant.

Abraham had to wait many years before some of these promised blessings were fulfilled, and they are still being fulfilled today.

Blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant

Earthly Blessings:

- A promised land to live in (Abraham 2:6, 19; Genesis 12:7; 17:8)
- A great posterity (Abraham 2:9–10; Genesis 12:2–3; 17:2, 4–6)

- The gospel of Jesus Christ and the priesthood for Abraham and his posterity (Abraham 2:9–11; Genesis 17:7)

Eternal Parallels:

- The celestial kingdom (D&C 88:17–20)
- Eternal marriage and eternal increase (D&C 132:19–22)
- Exaltation and eternal life (D&C 132:23–24)

A study of this lesson will help us understand the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant.

Next Week

#8: Living Righteously in a Wicked World (Genesis 13–14; 18–19)

"If a member of the Church is to bless the world and thus fulfill the obligation inherent in the Abrahamic covenant, he or she must be aware of two attitudes that hinder the effective influencing of the world for righteousness: being of the world, or like it, and being above the world, or aloof from others not yet part of the covenant. Both attitudes caused failures in the Old and the New Testaments. They stand in opposition to the very essence of the birthright, yet they are still pervasive among us. We must guard against them."

(S. Michael Wilcox, 1989 Sperry Symposium on the Old Testament)

"And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father; and I will bless them that bless thee ..."

Abr. 2:10-11

"Today, millions claim Abraham as their father. All may have his covenant privileges if they will but do the works of Abraham. The Lord never told Abraham that he alone would be blessed by the covenant or that it would bless only his birthright seed; the charge was that in him and his seed all families of all nations should be blessed. All who accept the covenant of the divine Redeemer become Abraham's seed spiritually and receive the same blessings as his biological descendants (Gen. 12:1-3; Abr. 2:8-11; Gal. 3:7-9, 26-29; cf. John 8:33, 37, 39; Rom. 9:6-8).

(Daniel H. Ludlow, Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1992 Macmillan Publishing)

We are heirs to the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant.



All Church members are the "seed of Abraham," which means we are his descendants. **Elder Joseph Fielding Smith** said: "The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs" ("How One May Become of the House of Israel," *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1923, 1149).

As the seed of Abraham, Church members are heirs to the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant. When we are baptized into the Church the Abrahamic covenant's promise of salvation is renewed with us. When we are sealed in the temple, the Abrahamic covenant's promise of exaltation is renewed with us. To receive the blessings of the covenant, we must fulfill the associated responsibilities and live worthily.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: "Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation); then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which

is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase; finally he received a promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity. (Abraham 2:6-11; D&C 132:29-50.) Included in the divine promises to Abraham was the assurance that Christ would come through his lineage, and the assurance that Abraham's posterity would receive certain choice, promised lands as an eternal inheritance.

(Abraham 2; Gen. Genesis 17; 22:15-18; Galatians 3.) "All of these promises lumped together are called the Abrahamic covenant. This covenant was renewed with Isaac (Gen. Genesis 24:60; 26:1-4, 24) and again with Jacob. (Gen. Genesis 28; 35:9-13; 48:3-4.) Those portions of it which pertain to personal exaltation and eternal increase are renewed with each member of the house of Israel who enters the order of celestial marriage; through that order the participating parties become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (D&C 132; Romans 9:4; Galatians 3; 4.)" (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. [1966], 13).

Through the Abrahamic covenant we can receive all the blessings that Abraham received, as outlined earlier in this lesson. These blessings include the gospel, the priesthood, exaltation, and eternal family relationships.

As heirs of the Abrahamic covenant our responsibilities include helping all of God's children, living and dead, receive the full blessings of the gospel. We are also to obey God's commandments. (See Abraham 2:9, 11; Genesis 18:19)

Responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant

- Help all of God's children receive the full blessings of the gospel (Abraham 2:9, 11)
- Obey God's commandments (Genesis 18:19)

We can help others receive the gospel by doing missionary work, by performing temple ordinances for the dead, and by being examples of righteousness.

President Ezra Taft Benson said, "The responsibility of the seed of Abraham, which we are, is to be missionaries to 'bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations' (Abraham 2:9)" (Ensign, May 1987, 85).

Elder Boyd K. Packer made the following analogy to emphasize our responsibility to share the gospel with others: *Imagine that our bishop has appointed us to plan a picnic for ward members. It is to be the best social in the history of the ward, and we are to spare no expense. We reserve a beautiful picnic ground in the country. We are to have it all to ourselves.*

The day arrives and everything is perfect. The tables are set and the feast is spectacular. Then, just as the blessing is being said, an old car turns into the picnic grounds and sputters to a stop. A worried man lifts the hood, and a spout of steam comes out. Several children climb out of the car. An anxious mother takes a box to a nearby table. She puts a few leftovers on the table, trying to make them look like a meal for her hungry children. But there is not enough.

Then one of the little girls sees our table. She pulls her little brother over to us and pushes her head between you and me. We move aside. The little girl says, "Look at that; I wonder what that tastes like."

What would we do? Would we ignore the people or ask them to be quiet? Would we show them back to their table and give them some of the food we don't really need? Or would we invite them to come and join us, to sit between us and share the feast, and to let us help fix their car and give them something for their journey?

Elder Packer asks: "Could there be more pure enjoyment than seeing how much we could get those hungry children to eat? Could there be more satisfaction than to interrupt our festivities to help [them] fix their car? ... " ... There are people across the world and about us—our neighbors, our friends, some in our own families—who, spiri-

tually speaking, are undernourished. Some of them are starving to death! If we keep all this to ourselves, it is not unlike feasting before those who are hungry" (Ensign, May 1984, 41–42).

Conclusion

We have been blessed with the fulness of the gospel, the greatest feast the world has ever known [D&C 58:8–12]. God expects us to share this blessing with others, both living and dead.

By declaring that we are the seed of Abraham, our patriarchal blessings reemphasize our privilege to receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant and our obligation to fulfill its responsibilities.

Elder Russell M. Nelson: "The ultimate blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are conferred in holy temples. These blessings allow us to come forth in the First Resurrection and inherit thrones, kingdoms, powers, principalities, and dominions, to our "exaltation and glory in all things" (D&C 132:19). The fulfillment of the ancient Abrahamic covenant is feasible only because of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who has made it possible for us to dwell with God, with Him, and with our families eternally. This is His work and His glory." (Special Witnesses of Christ, Ensign, April 2001)

Additional Teachings

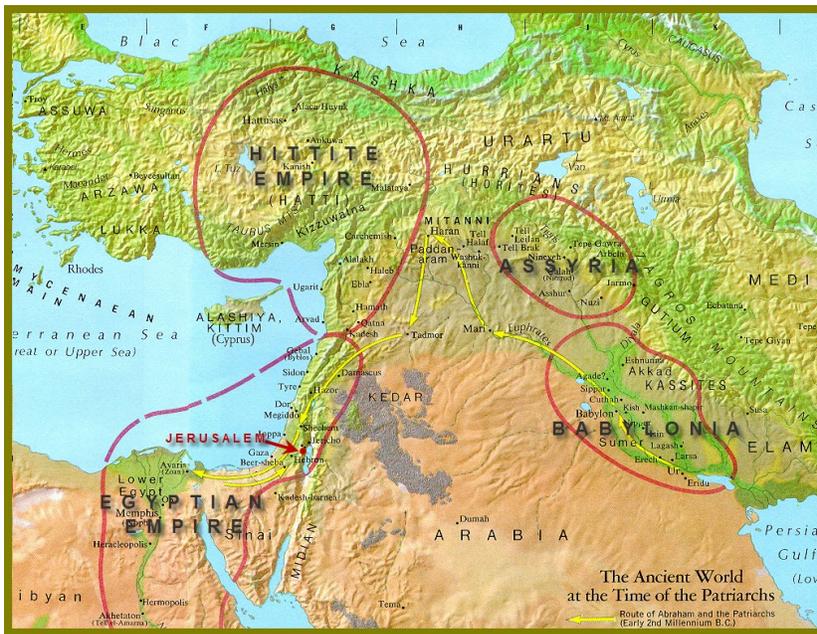
The ancient Israelites were surrounded by many nations whose people did not believe in the true God. These nations included the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and others.

Deuteronomy 4:6–8. The Lord wanted his covenant people to set an example for others and to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant to bless all nations.

Many stories in the Old Testament show the success or failure of the Lord's people to keep their covenants and influence others toward righteousness. Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and many others were righteous influences. Samson, Ahab, the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness, and others allowed the world to influence them.

"In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."

3 Ne. 20:27



Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How has your Patriarchal blessing been helpful in your life?
- What have you done to fulfill your responsibilities as an heir of the Abrahamic covenant?

As he did with ancient Israel, the Lord has placed us, his latter-day covenant people, in the middle of the world. Our challenge is to influence the world in righteous ways rather than allowing the world to influence us in unrighteous ways.