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## Who Are the Children of Abraham?

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**Abstract:** This article concludes that the children of Abraham are those who accept the gospel.

## THE EDITOR'S PAGE

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the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceeding fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them.

And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.

And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations. (I Nephi 13:10-19.)

It was the Lord who inspired Christopher Columbus, "a man among the Gentiles," and it was the Lord who inspired that little band of people who crossed the mighty ocean and landed at Plymouth Rock, because they desired to worship him according to the dictates of their own conscience. He watched over them and safeguarded their descendants and those who followed them to America, and in due time, there came an opportunity to establish liberty such as humankind had not known before. The Lord raised up Washington, and with him that body of men who fought valiantly to establish for us in this land a government for which surely we are all grateful.

Our feet have been planted upon this sacred soil for a wise promise. This land has been dedicated for the blessing of mankind. The Constitution and the laws that have been enacted under its provisions are calculated to insure liberty, not license, and not slavery, to all who dwell here. This Church with which we are identified stands for the perpetuation of the liberties of all mankind.

Upon you men of Israel—to whom the priesthood of the Holy One has been given—there rests an obligation. You must serve the Lord and keep his commandments. It matters not what others may do, but for you there is only one course, and that is to sustain the Constitution of this great land, and to sustain those influences and powers, whatever they may be, that are calculated to uplift the human family.

There should go forth from this great Church an influence intended to leaven the whole lump. We have received knowledge and information that our Father's children elsewhere know not of. We are in some respects in the position of Noah, who, in his day, went to and fro in the world, proclaiming the truth, calling all men to turn from the error of their ways, warning them of the impending judgments that would fall upon them if they failed to repent; but, in due time, those who refused to reform their lives and failed to listen to that servant of the Lord became absolutely unfit to inhabit this earth; and they were overwhelmed by the flood, while the eight who were righteous were pre-

served from that awful calamity. History has repeated itself many times—children of God who have followed his teachings have been preserved, and those who have refused have gone into darkness and have been destroyed.

We read in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew that the Savior foresaw the calamity that was coming upon his people and was greatly distressed. He said:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matt. 23:37.)

O that this great Church, with power that has been given to it of God, might be able to disseminate the truth more rapidly and save the nations from destruction. We are growing rapidly, as an organization, but I rejoice not so much in the increase numerically as I do in the belief that the influence that we radiate is being felt for good, and that our Father's children are hearing the message of life and salvation, without which they cannot dwell in the presence of the Redeemer of mankind.

The Lord has watched over this land: He directed Columbus to these shores: he led the Pilgrims here; he established the Constitution of the United States, and through the Prophet Joseph Smith restored the everlasting gospel to bless the children of men. If they will accept it and obey it, it will result in the salvation of the human family.

## WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM?

**A**BRAMHAM, the son of Terah, lived in the city of Ur of the Chaldees.<sup>1</sup> The family of Abraham had turned from righteousness and had become idolators.<sup>2</sup> Abraham therefore, himself a follower of God's truth, preached righteousness to them but without avail. For his insistence upon the worship of the only true and Living God, he was persecuted

<sup>1</sup>Genesis 11:31.

<sup>2</sup>Pearl of Great Price: Abraham 1:5-7.

*By John A. Widtsoe*

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and his life sought. So intense was the hatred of the idolators that it was only by the intervention of the Lord that he was saved from being offered up as a sacrifice to the idols of the people.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. 1:5-15.

Abraham was a chosen spirit, destined to be a great leader of the work of the Lord. He was commanded to move into another land to be shown him, where he might be free to worship the Lord of earth and the heavens. The Lord at that time gave Abraham a blessing which has sounded through the centuries and to which all Christians cling: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and

make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."<sup>4</sup>

In obedience to God's command, Abraham, with believing members of his family, moved into the promised land known to us as Palestine. The story is best told in his own words: "In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my father, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence;

"And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.

"It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundations of the earth to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, on the first man, who is Adam, our first father, through the fathers, unto me.

"I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed."<sup>5</sup>

In this new and strange land, Abraham became a mighty prince. He received the higher priesthood from Melchizedek himself, to whom he also paid "tithes."<sup>6</sup>

After he was well settled, the promise that the Lord had made to him was reiterated, especially on an occasion when the Lord communed with him.

"And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

"Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty na-

<sup>4</sup>Genesis 12:2-3.

<sup>5</sup>Pearl of Great Price: Abraham 1:1-4.

<sup>6</sup>Doctrine and Covenants 84:14-16; 27:10; 85:3.

tion, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."<sup>7</sup>

## Evidences

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The promise that in him all nations should be blessed, brought Abraham's work beyond that of flesh and blood relationships. It made of him a universal figure in the Lord's plan of salvation for all who were sent upon the earth. It would seem that the acceptance of the knowledge of the gospel, and the possession of the priesthood which Abraham bore would make all mankind heirs to the blessings promised Abraham.<sup>8</sup>

Modern revelation has confirmed this view and has cleared up the true meaning of the phrase, "in thee and thy seed." In the Book of Abraham, translated from Egyptian papyrus by Joseph Smith, the following statement is made: "My

<sup>7</sup>Genesis 18:17-19.

<sup>8</sup>See the first chapters in the Pearl of Great Price: Abraham.

### SMALL BOY IN WINTER

By Eleanor Alletta Chaffee

IF roses bloom in winter, they are here.  
His cheeks shine like twin flowers in the snow.

Within his eyes the blue of June lies clear;  
His heart is April, with the sudden glow  
Of unexpected sunlight. On his hair  
The gold of summer scatters in the light.  
His laughter like the brook runs smooth  
and fair;

His eyebrows are a bird's wings curved  
in flight.

He is as active as the wind that lifts  
Young leaves and makes soft music as it  
goes:

Across his face the sun's pale silver sifts  
As gently as the mist of twilight flows.  
He knows no season: Time has set him  
here,

A bright perennial, protected, dear.

name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

"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:"<sup>9</sup>

There can be no misunderstanding of this statement. All who accept the gospel become by adoption members of the family of Abraham.

Moreover, there is in the opinion of many, in this process of adoption, a subtle change in the body as well as in the spirit which makes a person a true heir of the promises to Abraham. This was the view also of the Prophet Joseph Smith, in a discourse on the two comforters. "The effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham."<sup>10</sup> This is reflected in the patriarchal blessings of the Church which generally assign nearly all persons to one or the other of the tribes of Jacob, direct descendants of Abraham.

This understanding of the promise to Abraham places a heavy responsibility upon all who accept the gospel. As children of Abraham, they are under obligation to do the works of Abraham. The waters of baptism carry with them the promise on the part of the candidate that he will conform his life to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which of course was the gospel given, accepted, and practised by Father Abraham.

The oft-asked question, "Who are the children of Abraham?" is well answered in light of the revealed gospel.

All who accept God's plan for his children on earth and who live it are the children of Abraham. Those who reject the gospel, whether children in the flesh, or others, forfeit the promises made to Abraham and are not children of Abraham.

<sup>9</sup>Abraham 2:8-10.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 150.