The Patriarchs from the book of Genesis Part 1 - June 25, 2023

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Who are the Patriarchs?

1. The simple answer is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.. and some include Joseph, all from the second half of the book of Genesis. However, the definition of a patriarch helps to determine a list of “patriarchs” and then a biblical reference naming a patriarch can add more individuals to the patriarch list. Also, those who lived during the “patriarchal age” can determine a list.
2. **Definition:** Easton's Bible Dictionary – Patriarch - a name employed in the New Testament with **biblical reference** to Abraham (Hebrews 7:4), the sons of Jacob (Acts 7:8 Acts 7:9), and to David (2:29). This name is generally applied to the progenitors of families or "heads of the fathers" (Joshua 14:1) mentioned in Scripture, and they are spoken of as antediluvian (from Adam to Noah) and post-diluvian (from Noah to Jacob) patriarchs. But the expression "the patriarch," by way of eminence, is applied to the twelve sons of Jacob, or to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – by Stephen in **Acts 7:8**: *“Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father* ***of the twelve patriarchs.”***
3. **Patriarchal Age:** According to dispensationalist Gregg Nydegger when writing for the Herald Journal: *“The Patriarchal age (father-rule) began with God’s creation of Adam and Eve and lasted until God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and Law, thus ending the Patriarchal age and beginning the second dispensation: the Mosaic age. (Genesis, Exodus 1-19, and Job occur within the Patriarchal age.)*

*A patriarch was the male head of a family, tribe or community. Notable patriarchs include Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses (whose life straddled both the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages).*

*Prominent women (a.k.a. matriarchs, who often asserted a strong influence within their family) include Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel.*

*Noteworthy events that occurred during the Patriarchal age include the first sin (Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit), the first murder (Cain killed Abel), the Tower of Babel, the worldwide flood and Noah building the ark, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Joseph (he of the multi-colored coat) rising to second in command under Pharaoh, the Hebrew nation enslaved in Egypt, God sending 10 plagues upon the Egyptians, the Exodus, and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea.”*

When we take a “covenant theology” point of view (as opposed to a dispensational point of view) we will note that previous to an Abrahamic Covenant, there was the Noahic Covenant:

Genesis 9:8-17: *Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 “Behold, I establish* ***my covenant*** *with you and your offspring after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. 11 I establish* ***my covenant with you****, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”*

*12 And God said, “This is the sign of the* ***covenant*** *that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the* ***covenant*** *between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my* ***covenant*** *that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.*

*16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the* ***everlasting covenant*** *between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” 17 God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the* ***covenant*** *that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”*

God's covenant with Noah provides an arena for His special grace to operate for the sake of our salvation, but this covenant is also the fruit of His common grace for all people. Everyone benefits from the regularity of nature, for it allows human society to flourish. We do not deserve this, and in preaching the gospel to others we should call their attention to the grace God has shown even while calling them not to presume upon His grace, but to repent\* that they would be saved.

\*repent – change your way of thinking.

**Genesis 12:1-3** starts with God informing Abram that He will make a covenant with him (Abram is 75 years old at this time):

*Now the Lord said to Abram,*

*“Go from your country,*

*And from your relatives*

*And from your father’s house,*

*To the land which I will show you;*

*2 And I will make you into a great nation,*

*And I will bless you,*

*And make your name great;*

*And you shall be a blessing;*

*3 And I will bless those who bless you,*

*And the one who curses you I will curse.*

*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”*

Notice this is a promise with a premise: do ‘this’, and I will do ‘this’.

The covenant between Abraham and God consisted of three separate parts: the promised land. the promise of the descendants. the promise of blessing and redemption.

**God informs Abram again in Genesis 15:1-11:**

*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,*

*“Do not fear, Abram,*

*I am a shield to you;*

*Your reward shall be very great.”*

*2 But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 Abram also said, “Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir.”*

*4 Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” 5 And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”*

*6* ***Then he believed in the Lord; and He credited it to him as righteousness.*** *7 And He said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.” 8 But he said, “Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?” 9 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. 11 And birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.*

*17 Now it came about, when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, a smoking oven and a flaming torch appeared which passed between these pieces.*

**R.C. Sproul**: “And we’re told that through belief in the promise of God, Abraham was counted “righteous.” That is what Genesis chapter 15 verse 6 means when it says Abraham “believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

This is a stunning moment: God’s revelation that faith in Him is the mechanism by which people are accepted by Him and become heirs of His promises. As Paul says in Romans chapter 4 and Galatians chapter 3, Abraham was justified by faith alone—faith in the promises of God. Promises which found their fulfilment in Christ.

That God operates like this is overwhelmingly good news—not just for Abraham but also for us. So let me say it again: salvation is given to us not because of anything we have done or could do or ever will do, but purely on the basis of what God has done. And we receive the benefits of what God has done simply by trusting Him, as Abraham did.

So here in Genesis, in the very first book of Scripture, in this Abrahamic covenant, is the good news that was fully revealed some two thousand years later in Christ.

We do not, and cannot, produce our own righteousness. We can’t do it any more than Abraham could. But Christ did live a perfectly righteous life. So, when we believe Christ, as Abraham believed God, we are declared righteous, just as Abraham was. Second Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 puts it this way: “For our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.”

There’s something else about the Abrahamic covenant that is extremely significant. When covenants were made in the ancient Near East, the two parties would kill an animal, cut it in half, and then both of them would walk between the two halves. It was a solemn and symbolic way for each person to say to the other: “If I break this covenant, may the same thing happen to me. May I be destroyed if I don’t keep this covenant.”

“But that is not what happens in the covenant between Abram and God. In this covenant, only God passes between the two halves of the animal, not Abram. God is saying to Abram, and by implication to all of God’s people: “This covenant does not depend on your obedience but on Mine. I swear by My own life that this promise will come to pass.”

And as if to further confirm that our righteousness does not depend on our obedience of God’s law, God credits Abraham with righteousness well before He gives Moses the Ten Commandments.

So that’s what the Abrahamic covenant has to do with us.

Abraham’s faith was counted to him as righteousness. If we have faith in Christ, our faith too will be counted to us as righteousness.”

**Genesis 17:1-8**:

*Now when Abram was* ***ninety-nine years old****, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him,*

*“I am God Almighty;*

*Walk before Me, and be blameless.*

*2 I will make My covenant between Me and you,*

*And I will multiply you exceedingly.”*

*3 Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,*

*4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,*

*And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.*

*5 No longer shall you be named Abram,*

*But your name shall be Abraham;*

*For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.*

*6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”*

**Now let’s look at one way God will bless and protect Abram - Abraham**

**Genesis 12:10-20:** *Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a time, because the famine was severe in the land. 11 It came about, when he was approaching Egypt, that he said to his wife Sarai, “See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; 12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well for me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.”*

*14 Now it came about, when Abram entered Egypt, that the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 Pharaoh’s officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. 16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and he gave him sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.*

*17 But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. 18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for myself as a wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go!” 20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.*

**Genesis 20:1-18:** *Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he lived for a time in Gerar. 2 And Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar sent men and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.” 4 Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You kill a nation, even though blameless? 5 Did he himself not say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.”*

*6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours.”*

*8 So Abimelech got up early in the morning and called all his servants, and told all these things in their presence; and the people were greatly frightened. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” 10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?”*

*11 Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. 12 Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife; 13 and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, ‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”*

*14 Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned his wife Sarah to him. 15 Abimelech said, “Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please.” 16 To Sarah he said, “Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is your vindication before all who are with you, and before everyone you are cleared.” 17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his female slaves, so that they gave birth to children. 18 For the Lord had completely closed all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.*

What is one thing we learn through this? God will keep His promises.