

Romans

Bible Study

Abraham Our Father

Romans 4:1—5

Abraham is honored as the father of Islam and Judaism. Both claim him as the father of their nation. Abraham is also claimed by Christians to be their father.

Father of Muslims

Muslims all claim Abraham (Ibraheem) as their father. They hold him high in claiming that he is a prophet and a messenger of Allah. They say that Abraham smashed all of his fathers idols and worshiped only Allah. Abraham is known as a prophet of peace with the message for all to serve the one true god, Allah.

The Muslim world was given life through Abraham's son, Ishmael (Ismail). Ishmael's mother was Hagar, a handmaid (said to have become Abraham's wife) to Abraham's wife, Sarah. They claim that Muhammad is a descendant of Abraham through Ishmael.

The Bible Shows that Sarah gave her handmaid to Abraham in an attempt to fulfill God's promise of having a son (Genesis 16). Once Hagar conceived, Sarah began to hate Hagar, probably because it emphasized that Sarah was barren. Hagar and Ishmael were eventually driven out of Abraham's household by Sarah when Ishmael was at least 14 years old (Genesis 21). God protected Hagar with the promise that He would make Ishmael a great nation.

Father of Israel

The Jews also claim Abraham to be their father. According to Scripture, Abraham was called to leave his family, living in Ur, and follow God's leading. Abraham was told by God that he would be the father of many nations, and that he would be given a son by God. After Abraham and Sarah were physically unable to have children, God provided them with a son called Isaac (Genesis 16—17). Abraham never wavered from believing that God would supply them with a son (Romans 4:20), however, God would fulfill His promise by His means, not man's.

Isaac later married Rebekah and they had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the son of promise, and from him came the 12 sons who would become heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. Only the sons coming through the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the people of God's promise of becoming a great nation.

John 8:37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

Acts 7:32 saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

Father of Jesus Christ

Abraham was also the (fore)father of Jesus Christ. It is through his line that the promise of salvation is given. Out of Abraham came Isaac Jacob and Judah. From Judah came King David, Nathan...Mary and Jesus. Jesus was born in the line of King David to fulfill prophecy.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Father of believers

Abraham is all the father of all who believe, Jews and Gentiles. He is said to be our father because he was declared righteous because of faith, as all believers are.

Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Dispensational change

In order to understand what Paul is talking about in this section of Scripture, it must be viewed dispensationally. Romans 4:12 includes those who are not of the circumcision, the Gentiles. Before this Dispensation of Grace, the Gentiles were not included in Israel's promises (Ephesians 2:12). When God was dealing with Israel under prophecy, the Gentiles had no hope, they were without Christ and far off from the promises given to Israel. But now, the Gentiles were made near because the dividing wall of the Law was torn down (Ephesians 2:13—16). This change in dispensation is reflected in what is written in the book of Romans.

Justified by faith

Before Abraham was given the sign of circumcision, his faith was already counted for righteousness (Romans 4:10; Galatians 3:6). His justification was not based on any works of the Law, or becoming circumcised. All he had to do was believe God without adding works.

According to Galatians 3:23, there was a period when a person was unable to come strictly by faith. The Mosaic Law was put into place to show Israel that it was impossible to be saved by obeying the Law. This verse also makes it clear that there was coming a time when we would be able to come to Christ by faith alone. This new dispensation occurred with Israel's rejection of her Messiah in Acts 7. Abraham was an example of how we are now able to come to God through faith alone.

Paul describes Israel under Law with the Body of Christ under Grace in Galatians 4:27—31. Here he compares Hagar, the bondwoman, who bore Ismael strictly by fleshly means, as a picture of Israel under the Law. Sarah, on the other hand, is called the free woman who bore the son of promise by a work of God. We are children of the promise because of faith.

Faith plus works

Those who rightly divide Scripture, separating Israel's program from the church's program, will have no problem with the apparent contradiction found when comparing Romans 4:5 with James 2:20. Romans tells us that we are saved through faith alone. James says that faith without works is a dead faith.

Those who don't understand dispensational truth use the convoluted explanation that Romans speaks of our relationship with God and James is about our relationship with man. The problem is that James describes your faith as dead without works, and perfected with works (James 2:22). He continues by saying that a man is justified by works (James 2:24). Justification is a work of God. If James were about demonstrating our faith to men through works, then those works should have no effect upon God. However, James says that our works are important for justification. They are not just works before men.

Both passages of Scripture are correct when dispensationally viewed. Israel was required to do the works of the Law to prove their faith in order to be saved. These were works defined by God, not by the individual. Members of the Church, the Body Christ are saved through faith, without any requirements for adding works to prove their faith. Paul is contrasting "times past" with the "but now" revealed under the Mystery (Ephesians 2:11—13).

Faith as a work?

There are some who claim that faith is a gift given by God to those who are elect to be saved. They claim that Ephesians 2:8—9 shows this connection: For by grace are ye saved through faith; it is a gift of God... Although Scripture often shows salvation as a gift, many incorrectly believe that faith is the gift given by God. However, all men are given the opportunity to come to Him in faith (Acts 17:27; 1 Timothy 2:4). We are all responsible to accept God's offer without waiting to see if God will give you the gift of faith.

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