

THE END TIMES

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TRACING THE PROPHETIC THREAD

“...spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” — Acts 3:21

There is one prophetic theme that weaves its way like a golden thread throughout the Scriptures. This thread has been God's intricate and merciful plan which was set in motion even before the foundation of the world. Every one of God's holy prophets have spoken of God's ultimate plan to restore all that was lost in the Garden of Eden. History and Bible chronology indicate that the time in which we are now living is nearing the very end of this golden thread of prophecy. Very soon, God's Holy name and plan will be vindicated, and all will testify to the wisdom of His grand purposes and plan.

THE THREAD BEGINS: “THE SEED”

The thread of prophecy began with a vague promise to Eve that through her *seed* mankind would ultimately be recovered from the power of Satan — the author of sin and death. God, speaking to Satan said: “*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*” (Genesis 3:15) This was a glimmer of hope that a *promised seed*, a Messiah, would one day deal a fatal blow to the head of Satan, thereby ending the bitter struggle between good and evil.

Adam and Eve may have hoped that one of their sons would be that *promised seed*. Their son Abel was a faithful man of God, but when Cain killed Abel in jealous anger, the hopes of Adam and Eve were surely dashed. In one devastating act, they lost two of their sons — one in death and the other in exile. Thus, the *thread of prophecy* was yet for a future time, as indicated by the faithful Enoch: “*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints...*” Jude 14

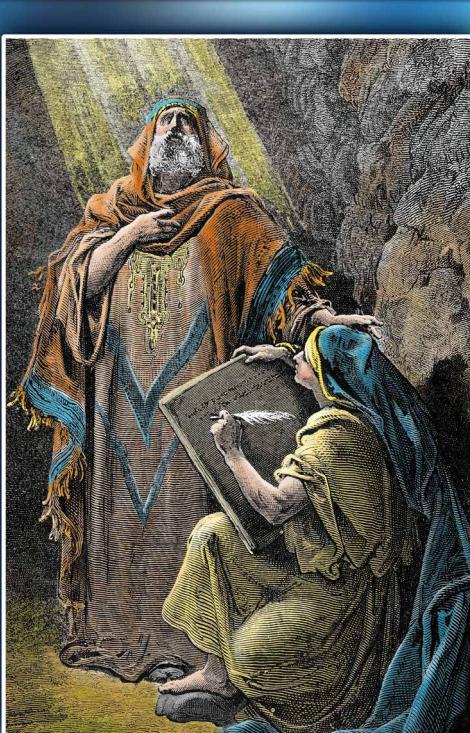
THE PROMISED SEED PRESERVED

Time and generations passed and all those with faith waited expectantly for the realization of the prophetic *seed of promise*. The angels, too, looked for its fulfillment. As they observed the human family, certain angels, with prideful hearts and in sympathy with the rebellion of Satan, contemplated marriage with the daughters of men that they might bring forth a *seed* more powerful than weak fallen man. In Genesis 6:1-14 we read the result: “*And it came to*

pass... that the sons of God [angelic beings] saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. ...God saw that the wickedness of man was great... that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark...”

Humanity, then contaminated and thoroughly corrupted by these fallen angels, perished in the Great Flood. Noah and his family survived the flood to a cleansed earth — uncontaminated from the fallen angels. Thus, the *prophetic thread* was not severed and the promise to Eve continued through the line of Noah.

Noah's sons were Ham, Shem and Japheth. Shem was faithful to the Lord and became the line through which the *seed of promise* would pass. It is presumed, through reasoning on the Scriptures, that Shem is the noted Melchizedek — the honored, ancient prince of peace — a man of sincere faith in the prophetic *seed*. Of the generations from Shem was born the faithful patriarch Abraham. No doubt, Abraham learned of the *thread of prophecy* through the patriarch Shem who lived contemporaneously with Abraham for 150 years.



THE PROPHETIC THREAD AND THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

Abraham was unique in his generation because of his strong faith in God. The Apostle Paul states: “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” (Galatians 3:6) God tested this faith to the extreme when He asked Abraham to deliver up his only son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham, although grieved in his heart, did not hesitate, but willingly submitted to God's request. This was no small sacrifice, as Isaac was a miracle of birth, conceived when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90. Genesis 17:17

At the moment Abraham prepared to slay Isaac, the angel of the Lord stopped his hand and provided a ram caught in the thicket to offer as a sacrifice in Isaac's place. Because of this heroic faithfulness, God swore an oath to Abraham: “*By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will*

bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; ...in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” (Genesis 22:16-18) Herein lies the entire plan of God — the essence of the *golden thread of prophecy!* The *seed of promise* would bring about the blessing of all nations in due time!

ESAU SHOWS NO RESPECT FOR HIS INHERITANCE

It was customary in those days to pass down from generation to generation, not only the inheritance of wealth, but, also, blessings to the eldest son. Isaac, being the firstborn through Abraham's wife Sarah, received the inheritance of Abraham's riches, but especially the most valuable of all, that through his line the *promised seed* would come.

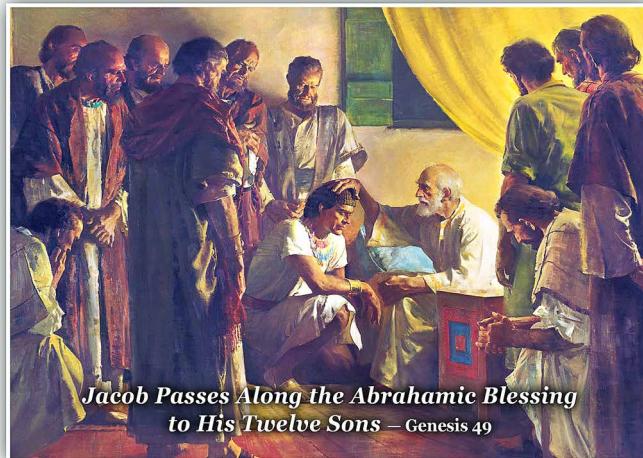
Isaac had twin sons, and Esau, as his firstborn, would have been Isaac's heir. Esau was a careless man who did not appreciate the privilege of his inheritance. After a long day of hunting, in one reckless act, he sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob for a pot of stew to feed his hungry flesh. Jacob was quick to seize the opportunity to receive this grand prize of the promise, but it did not come without consequences. As a result, strife has existed between the descendants of these two brothers to this day.

THREAD WOVEN THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS OF ISRAEL

With the inheritance now passing to Jacob, it would fall upon Jacob's descendants to carry forward the promise to *bless all of the families of the earth*. Jacob, full of faith, pleased God: “*Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men...*” (Genesis 32:28) Jacob begat twelve sons, and upon his deathbed, God pronounced Jacob's sons as a nation — the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, Israel, as a nation, inherited the Abrahamic promise — “*in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*”

To protect the lineage from which the *promised seed* would come, God specially protected Israel as His chosen people. “*You only have I known of all the families of the earth...*” (Amos 3:2) God provided Israel the Ten Commandments and the Law to separate them from the contaminating influences of other nations who worshiped false gods. (See Galatians 3:19) But, Israel strayed from their promise to God to “*do all that the Lord hath commanded.*” Like Esau, they were irresponsible regarding their special privileges of being God's chosen people. In fact, during the period from Jacob's death to the birth of Christ, only a remnant of Jews remained loyal and obedient to God — sincerely appreciating the privilege of their inherited blessing.

Although the nation of Israel, like disobedient children, rebelled against God, He still watched over and guided them as His chosen people for the sake of their fathers — preserving the line for the *promised seed*. “*And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power...*” Deuteronomy 4:37



Jacob Passes Along the Abrahamic Blessing to His Twelve Sons — Genesis 49

The Promised Seed is Born

At the chosen time, God did send His son Jesus to be the Messiah of Israel — the prophesied *seed of promise*. And, at the time, to many of the nation of Israel the prophecy given to Abraham seemed to be fulfilled through this miracle worker from Nazareth! But Jesus was put to death as a common sinner upon the cross, and all seemed lost. Indeed, Satan thought he had broken the *thread* of the original prophecy, and that, therefore, the *seed of the woman* (Jesus) could no longer deal Satan that fatal blow. But, contrary to Satan's evil design, within three days, Christ, the worthy Lamb, was raised from the grave “*to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*” Revelation 5:12

Yes, it was not until the sacrificial life and death of Christ that the Scriptures began to reveal the plan of redemption which God has provided through His obedient Son. Guided by the holy Spirit, Jesus and his disciples gave clear testimony that the curse of death upon Adam and his family would be removed in due time. One of the final promises provided in Scripture is that “*there will no longer be any curse*” of Adamic death. Revelation 22:3 NAS

Spiritual Israelites:

Also Inheritors of the Promise

Before blessings will flow to all nations of the earth, God purposed that Christ would select as *heirs of the promise* a *spiritual seed* of dedicated believers — termed the body of Christ — his Bride. Of these the Apostle Paul reasoned: “*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” (Galatians 3:29) Therefore, the followers of Christ, as his body members, are fellow inheritors of the promise — being a part of Abraham's *seed* through Christ.

As the servant is not above his master, so the body of Christ has received the same treatment during this Gospel Age — the true Church has been *abused* by Satan and his adherents. And as Satan attempted to rid himself of Jesus, the *promised seed*, so he has attempted to rid himself of the body of Christ. Satan has sought to kill the followers of Jesus by every evil means at his disposal. Sincere Christians have been burned alive, crucified, tortured, fed to the lions and have suffered insults and slanderous attacks simply for being faithful to God's Truth.

God has a marvelous purpose for all of the experiences which Christ and his body members have endured. “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” (Romans 8:28, 29) These faithful few who have chosen to live and die with Christ, will be granted to live and reign with Christ in the resurrection. “*For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...*” (2 Timothy 2:11, 12) And, like Jesus, we learn obedience by the things which we suffer. (Hebrews 5:8) Only by these sufferings will the Church be proven trustworthy — having their characters crystallized — prepared for the future work of bringing blessings to all the families of the earth. God will grant this high reward only to those who have been tested and proven faithful. Revelation 2:10

Israel Not Cast Off Forever

And so, the *thread of prophecy* has reached its way to the *spiritual seed of promise*. But did God abandon the prophecies concerning the *natural seed* of Abraham? We read that our Lord was born under the Law Covenant “*that he might redeem those who were under the Law.*” (Galatians 4:4, 5) In order to fulfill the special blessing of God’s Covenant with Abraham, *in thy seed*, it was necessary that Christ should be of the nation of Israel and should redeem them specifically. “*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” (Matthew 15:24) This same Law was meant to be a *schoolmaster* to lead the Jews to their Messiah, but the Jews who concentrated on the *letter of the Law* missed the *spirit* of it and the resulting blessing. (Galatians 3:24) The nation of Israel fully expected that the *seed of promise* would come forth as a mighty King like David and bring Israel forth as a powerful nation among nations! But when Jesus, who looked so promising, failed to meet their expectations, they labeled him an imposter and nailed him to the cross.

Did this act of rejecting their Messiah sever the *thread of prophecy* to them? Has God cast away the people whom He promised would be specially used by Him in bestowing the blessing and instruction to all nations? God has not in any degree abandoned His original program as respects the nation of Israel — the *natural seed* of Abraham. This prophecy of the Abrahamic promise, the blessing of all the families of the earth through Israel, *will be* accomplished. “*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please....*” Isaiah 55:11

Notice how the Apostle Paul states this matter clearly in Romans 11:25-36. There he tells us that we should think not of Israel as being cast off forever, but merely disfavored of God for a limited period of time. The Church of Christ was first to be gathered from among the Jewish people, but because that nation rejected their Messiah, God turned to the Gentiles to gather and complete Christ’s body. (Acts 15:14) When this elect number of *spiritual Israel* is complete, God’s favor will return to *natural Israel*, Jacob, and then *all Israel shall be saved* (verse 26).

Jeremiah prophesied that, under the New (Law) Covenant promised to Israel, their sins would be cancelled and *remembered no more*. This prophecy will be fulfilled at the close of the Gospel Age and not at its beginning. “*After those days [after the body of Christ is complete], ...I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the [Law] Covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; ...I will put my [New] law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; ...for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.*” (Jeremiah 31:29-34) These words of Jeremiah are proof positive that God has “*...not cast away his people which he foreknew.*” Romans 11:2

Thus, the *thread of prophecy* is accomplished through both the *spiritual* as well as the *natural seed* of Abraham: (1) the *stars of heaven* — the *spiritual seed* and (2) the *sands of the seashore* — the *natural*

seed. The Bride of Christ — the Church comprised of both Jews and Gentiles — developed during the Gospel Age is the *spiritual seed*, pictured as the *stars of heaven*, while the *natural seed* of Abraham is yet to become as the *sand of the seashore*. As soon as Israel accepts the offer of redemption through Christ, she will be the nation from whom the blessings of the Abrahamic promise will flow throughout the earth.

Blessings to All the Families of the Earth

The crowning feature of God’s marvelous plan is not only that of developing and blessing the *seed* (spiritual and fleshly Israel), but that the *seed* will extend this blessing to all the remainder of mankind. “*...God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. ...After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, ...and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord...*” Acts 15:14-17

The *residue* [the rest] of mankind will receive their blessing from God after the Messiah (head and body) has been lifted up in glory, according to our Lord’s own statement, “*I, if I be lifted up..., will draw all men unto me.*” (John 12:32) Then, Christ and his Bride will bless and guide Israel — a nation prepared to be his earthly representatives in teaching righteousness to all the families of mankind. Thus, we read: “*And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [God’s Kingdom in heaven], and to the house of the God of Jacob*

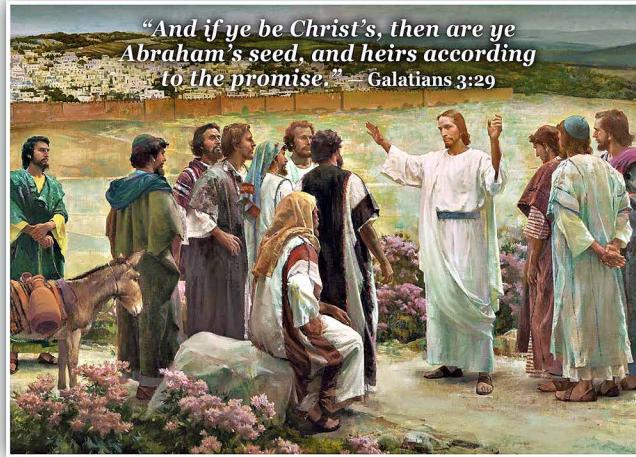
[His Kingdom to come in earth]; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” Micah 4:2

Eden’s Paradise Lost Will Become Paradise Restored!

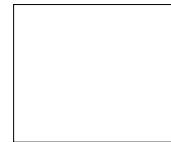
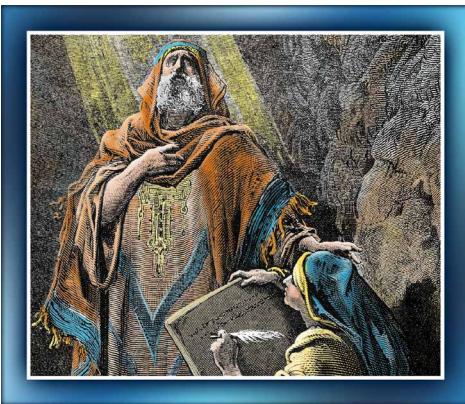
Adam and Eve would never have expected that now, over 6,000 years later, the complete fulfillment of the original prophecy given to Eve in Genesis 3:15 is about to be realized. The *thread of prophecy* has gradually been advancing throughout history even unto the *time of the end* in which we now live. Soon “*the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*” (Habakkuk 2:14) Then all will realize the rewards of obedience and the penalties of disobedience, that they may learn the benefit of righteousness. Isaiah 26:9

As the earth was part of man’s original estate, it too shared in the curse pronounced upon Adam: “*...cursed is the ground for thy sake...*” (Genesis 3:17) In fact, “*...the whole creation groaneth and travaleth in pain together...*” But, God has promised the restitution of *all things* provided by the sacrifice of Christ. (Romans 8:19-23, Acts 3:20, 21) The entire work of the thousand-year Millennium will consist in restoring and making God’s footstool glorious — the entire earth shall become as the Garden of Eden.

Yes, God “*...shall bruise Satan [with the fatal blow] under your feet shortly.*” (Romans 16:20) And thus will the *thread of prophecy* reach its end and be completely fulfilled. “*And saviours [Christ and his Bride] shall come up on mount Zion... and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.*” Obadiah 1:21



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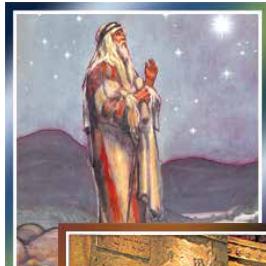
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