

THE
COVENANT
OF GOD
PART 1

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Crossroads Full Gospel
International Ministries

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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THE COVENANT OF GOD

PART 1

A covenant is a formal binding contract which exists between two or more parties in which each pledges to perform certain actions in regard to the other/s. A covenant is a very serious agreement and something which is not entered into lightly. Nor is it something which is undertaken if there is any intention of revoking it or breaking the commitment.

The making of a covenant assumes that there will be blessing and productivity if the covenant is honoured, and conversely, that there will be a curse or dishonour if the covenant is broken.

The existence of these two consequences is an integral part of any proper covenant agreement which is established, and demonstrates the seriousness of the arrangement which is entered into. This is further enhanced by the fact that throughout the eastern world, covenants are often ratified or established through the shedding of blood.

We will now look at God's Word to discover various Covenants which were established by God at different points in time with different groups and individuals.

God covenanted with Adam, Abraham, Jacob and Moses, but as concerning spiritual things, in each instance it was basically the same Covenant, a Covenant of Redemption by grace through faith. The grace of the Cross was promised straight after the Fall when God covenanted with man, His fallen creation. God provided the way for that grace to be held in advance, as if by a promissory note. All man needed to do was follow God's direction, by acknowledging the Mighty God, Creator and Lord of all. He then needed to acknowledge that he himself was merely the creation, and as such, was meant to worship the Creator and rely on what He gives to His fallen creation so that man may stay, to some extent, spiritual in heart and attitude. For those who looked at God the Creator, and followed Him according to His Covenant, the grace of the Cross was guaranteed.

From Calvary, this grace of the Cross flowed back to Adam and flows forward to us today - all in order to save God's fallen creation, man.

“ . . . From Calvary, this grace of the Cross flowed back to Adam and flows forward to us today - all in order to save God's fallen creation, man. . . ”

In regard to God's Covenant with Israel, this nation, as concerning natural events, still has to be restored to the position of head nation on earth with Christ as its ruler. This will take place following the Second Coming, when according to the Prophets, even more Jews will migrate to Israel from all over the world, with most accepting Jesus. They will add to the remnant (the one third) remaining when Jesus' appearing puts an end to the Battle of Armageddon (Romans 9:27, 10:5; Zechariah 12:3, 9, 10; 13:8-9). This will begin "*the Kingdom*" spoken of in Acts 1:6, the physical dispensational Millennial Kingdom, with Israel restored to her rightful place (Zechariah 8:23). Saved Jews will then begin the evangelization of this Kingdom, to declare the glory of the Lord to the Gentiles (Isaiah 66:19).

Israel as a nation must still be dealt with by God in the future (namely at the Second Coming of Christ) so that these events can take place. Sadly many will die in an unsaved state before the return of Christ, and will go to hell. Gentile and Jew are invited as individuals this day, and must accept the Atonement of Christ and Him as Lord and Saviour in order to become members of the Body of Christ. Therefore there is no difference between Jew and Gentile (Romans 10:12-13). In this study book we deal mainly with the Body of Christ (the Church - Matthew 16:18), but Israel's destiny as a nation will also be briefly covered.

God did not use, only to then discard the race that He ordained for the purpose of bringing Himself to the earth as a man to save mankind. It is no small thing to be used as God's instrument to bring the grace of salvation to the world. Therefore God has chosen a special honour for Israel - to be, as a physical nation, head over all

the nations on earth in the Millennial reign of Christ. Israel had its chance in Jesus' day to accept its King. However the Jews rejected the Messiah they had awaited so long. God will bring them to a position of repentance and acceptance of their King when Jesus comes back to earth again as the Son of Man. The seven years of tribulation will help to bring this about, among other things. Such are the hard stoney hearts of these people. But let us as the Church remember that without God's grace, we too would have remained dead to God.

“. . . God has chosen a special honour for Israel - to be, as a physical nation, head over all the nations on earth in the Millennial reign of Christ. . . ”

From one commentary we find this point:

WAS THE CHURCH ALWAYS THE PLAN OF GOD?

In a word, “No!” However, it was always God’s intention, that the Gospel be given to the entirety of the world, even as the Promise was given to Abraham (Genesis 12:3).

To take this thought to its final conclusion, however, one would have to ascertain that neither was it God’s perfect will regarding the bringing of Israel into existence.

Knowing that sin is never the Will of God, one must come to the conclusion, as should be overly obvious, that it was certainly not God’s Will for Adam and Eve to fall in the Garden of Eden. However, through foreknowledge, God knew that such would happen, and provided a contingency. That contingency was Israel.

In this fallback plan, that is if one would be allowed to refer to it as such, it was God’s intention that Israel would accept the Kingdom on the First Advent of the Messiah, which would have made the formation of the Church, at least as we know such, unnecessary. That’s the reason both John the Baptist and Jesus came preaching, “. . . Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Mat.4:17). Actually, the term “Kingdom of Heaven,” is a dispensational term and refers to Messiah’s Kingdom on Earth. It was rejected so was

postponed until the Second Coming, when Israel will then accept Christ as Saviour, Lord, and Messiah (Mat.11:12; 20-24; 27:22-25; Lk.19:11-17; Acts 1:6-7; 3:19-26).

Israel rejecting the Kingdom, subjected the world to another period of wars, insurrections, sickness, suffering, and plagues, which have continued for nearly 2,000 additional years.

WHY IS ISRAEL SO SPECIAL RESPECTING THE USHERING IN OF THE KINGDOM ?

In fact, and as we have previously stated, before the Kingdom can commence, Israel must in fact accept Jesus as Messiah and Saviour. Only then can everything be brought into proper balance, with the Nations of the world being blessed as God originally intended. However, for this to be, Israel must serve in the capacity of Leadership. This is because of the Promises made to Abraham and to David.

The Divine Monarchy is in the lineage of David, and, consequently, Jesus as the “Son of David” must ultimately sit upon that Throne, which He shall in the coming Kingdom Age. As we have stated, these people were brought about for the very purpose of giving the world the Word of God, serving as the womb for the Messiah, and regaining the dominion lost by Adam through the Throne of David (Genesis 12:1-3; Chpt.15; 17:19; II Samuel Chpt.7).”¹

(underlines added)

Love does not force. But God will bring Israel to her knees by allowing her to go her own way so that eventually she will see and accept her error, and willingly and with repentance acknowledge and receive the Saviour of the world (Zechariah 12:10). Israel will yet fulfill her ultimate and eternal destiny in the coming Kingdom Age.

“The Church must ever know and understand, that it was and is second choice. The Truth is, even as the next verse proclaims (Romans 11:20), the Branches were broken off not because of a need to make room for the Church. As stated, the Church was not really in the Plan of God, at least as we know it presently. It was God’s original Plan that Israel would be the instrument of World Evangelism. She forfeited that, even as we are studying here.

However, she will ultimately carry out this task in the coming Kingdom Age (Isaiah 66:19).”² (underlines and reference added)

THE COVENANT OF LIFE

Background Reading: Genesis 2:4-7

It appears that the first Covenant that God made between Himself and man was instigated when God breathed into Adam the breath of life. It was at this point that man became a living soul. And since *“the life is in the blood”* (Leviticus 17:11a), this then is the point at which blood began to flow in Adam’s body. So this was the beginning of the first blood Covenant, a living blood Covenant between God and man.

“. . .It appears that the first Covenant that God made between Himself and man was instigated when God breathed into Adam the breath of life. . .”

Normally a covenant is an agreement between two persons. However before Adam’s creation, God the Father, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit could only agree together, and in Their foreknowledge, act as man’s representative. God brought this Covenant into being through His Word. The Covenant then became a living reality when blood began to flow in Adam’s veins. This blood then became the sign of the pledge that God would give life, both spiritual and physical, to His new creation. Included in this Covenant was the provision of food, both natural and physical. Obviously Adam agreed to the conditions of the Covenant when he came into existence (i.e. not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) and thus the Covenant of Life or the living Covenant was fully established.

The first blood Covenant was nullified, however, when Adam sinned - for in so doing, he broke the conditions which governed its continuation. Through his sin, Adam allowed Satan (death’s representative) to legally adopt him, and God lost His legal parental

rights to man. The Covenant of Life was broken and mankind entered into a pact of death. Satan thus became mankind's legal spiritual father, and all of Adam's descendants were born into a state of sin, separated from God.

“ . . . The first blood Covenant was nullified, however, when Adam sinned - for in so doing, he broke the conditions which governed its continuation. . . ”

So first there was life in the blood, then death entered the blood and established itself in perpetuity in Adam's descendants. In order for life to return to man's spiritual veins, a cleansing was needed. God's glory was needed to cleanse man's spiritual veins of sin's pollution that caused the death of man's spirit. Through the sacrifice of the Saviour, God's saving presence is now able to cleanse man's spirit and surround that spirit in order to protect it from all evil. Physical death, however, initiated through Adam's sin, will remain in man until the sin nature is dealt with - for the last enemy to be conquered will be physical death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). This will constitute the last installment of the Cross i.e. the immortal, glorified body.

As a seed needs to fall to the earth and die before it can bring new life, so too the sinless seed (child) of a virgin needed to be born and grow in faith, only to die - so that through this seed, new life would come forth.

THE SECOND BLOOD COVENANT

Background Reading: Genesis 3:9-21

Scripture reveals that the second blood Covenant was established when God sacrificed some animals (i.e. shed blood) in order to make garments of skin for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). As we have previously learned, the main reason God did this was not to provide clothing for Adam and Eve, but to shed the blood of an innocent sacrifice for their sins. We know this because Hebrews 9:22 tells us “. . . *without the shedding of blood there is no remission*

(forgiveness of sins).” This action, like most things pertaining to the sacrificial killing of animals, pointed to Calvary and the innocent Lamb on the Cross (John 1:29).

The first Covenant was instigated through living blood. **The second Covenant** was instigated through the shedding of innocent blood which meant death. Along with this, God promised a better Covenant - another living blood Covenant (Genesis 3:15). If man was to be released from death’s eternal grip and reunited with his true spiritual father, he had to return via another living Covenant.

GOD’S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Background Reading: Genesis Chapter 15

God called Abraham out from the idolatrous society in which he lived, and told him to travel to a land he did not know, being separated unto Himself. God promised to establish an everlasting Covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

GENESIS 12:1 *Now the Lord had said unto Abram, “Get out of (leave) your country, and from (leave) your kindred, and from (leave) your father’s house, unto a land that I will show you (God called Abram to separate himself from everything he had known):*

GENESIS 12:2 *And I will make of you a great nation (the nation which God made of Abraham has changed the world, and exists even unto this hour; in fact, this nation “Israel” still has a great part to play, which will take place in the coming Kingdom Age), and I will bless you and make your name great (according to Scripture, “to bless” means “to increase;” the builders of the Tower of Babel sought to “make us a name,” whereas God took this man, who forsook all, and “made his name great”); and you shall be a blessing: (Concerns itself with the greatest blessing of all. It is the glory of Abraham’s Faith. God would give this man the meaning of Salvation, which is “Justification by Faith,” which would come about through the Lord Jesus Christ, and what Christ would do on the Cross. Concerning this, Jesus*

said of Abraham, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad” [John 8:56].)
(E.S.B.)

GENESIS 12:3 And I will bless them who bless you, and curse him who curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed (through Israel came the Word of God and the Messiah, and so now all those on the earth who desire the greatest blessing of justification by faith can receive it).”

Later, the Lord God again spoke to Abraham in regard to the Covenant, promising him a son and heir, and a multitude of descendants. In Abraham’s response we find the precious revelation of justification by faith, the only means by which salvation can be received.

GENESIS 15:1 After these things the Word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, “Fear not, Abram: I am your shield (of protection), and your exceeding great reward.”

GENESIS 15:2 And Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go (remain) childless, and the steward of my house (the one who is in line to inherit my estate) is this Eliezer of Damascus?”

GENESIS 15:3 And Abram said, “Behold, to me You have given no seed (no children): and, lo, one born in my house is my heir.”

GENESIS 15:4 And, behold, the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying, “This (man Eliezer) shall not be your heir; but he who shall come forth out of your own bowels (body) shall be your heir.”

GENESIS 15:5 And He (the Lord) brought him (Abraham) forth abroad, and said, “Look now toward heaven, and tell (count) the stars, if you be able to

number them:” and He said unto him, “So shall your seed (descendants) be.”

GENESIS 15:6 *And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord (believed what the Lord had said); and He (the Lord) counted it to him (Abraham) for righteousness. (This is one of the single most important Scriptures in the entirety of the Word of God. In this simple term, “Abraham believed the Lord,” we find the meaning of Justification by Faith. Abraham was saved by Grace through Faith, not by his good works. There is no other way of Salvation anywhere in the Bible) (E.S.B.)*

God also promised to bless Abraham and to make him the father of many nations. Abraham entered into this Covenant by faith, for he believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness (Romans 4:3). God’s part of the Covenant was to fulfill His promises to Abraham. Abraham’s part of this Covenant was to walk righteously before God. The seal of the Covenant was, as we have learned, the circumcision of the flesh. This practice was to continue down the generations of Abraham’s descendants, being a constant reminder to them of God’s promises to them, the nation of Israel. In actual fact it pointed to the days after the Cross where man’s heart would be circumcised because of God’s mercy and grace.

“. . .God’s part of the Covenant was to fulfill His promises to Abraham. Abraham’s part of this Covenant was to walk righteously before God. . .”

In Genesis Ch.17 God said to Abram:

GENESIS 17:1 *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, “I am the Almighty God (El Shaddai, having the power to bring My promises to fruition); walk before Me, and be thou perfect (the Patriarch must be perfect in his Faith; it must not waver as it had done regarding the*

situation with Hagar, but must rest in Almighty God, Who is able to perform what He has promised). (E.S.B.)

GENESIS 17:2 And I will make My Covenant between Me and you (the Lord here is renewing the promises of the Covenant and expanding on them), and will multiply you exceedingly.”

GENESIS 17:3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

GENESIS 17:4 “As for Me, behold, My Covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.

GENESIS 17:5 Neither shall your name any more be called Abram (meaning “exalted father”), but your name shall be Abraham (meaning “father of multitudes”); for a father of many nations have I made you.

GENESIS 17:6 And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you.

GENESIS 17:7 And I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you.”

The term “Almighty God” is a translation of the Hebrew words “El Shaddai” which means “All-Sufficient One.” So God was promising through these words to be the provider of everything that Abraham and his descendants would ever need. This pertained to all Abraham’s needs - physical, spiritual, financial and social. God purposed through this Covenant to bless Abraham and his descendants, and to make them His witnesses on the earth. For this reason God desired to bless them spiritually, physically and financially, and to demonstrate to the heathen nations the blessings which could be enjoyed through serving the one and only living God.

“ . . . The primary blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant, however, was justification by faith, for Abraham believed God and was justified. . . ”

The primary blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant, however, was justification by faith, for Abraham believed God and was justified. This was not of the Law, which Moses introduced many years later at Sinai. The Law of Moses was of a temporary nature and was designed to direct people to God and so the Cross. It was not a competing means of righteousness. Justification by faith, however, both preceded and outlived it. This singular blessing is identified in scripture, firstly in the blessing bestowed by Isaac upon Jacob:

GENESIS 28:3 And God Almighty bless you (Jacob), and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a multitude of people;

GENESIS 28:4 And give you the blessing of Abraham (justification by faith), to you, and to your seed with you; that you may inherit the land wherein you are a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Again, Abraham's faith was accounted to him as righteousness, so making him the father of all who believe.

ROMANS 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed (all who will believe); not to that only which is of the Law (the Jews, Abraham's natural seed), but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham (his spiritual seed); who is the father of us all,

GALATIANS 3:7 Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the (spiritual) children of Abraham.

GALATIANS 3:9 So then they (whomsoever they might be) which be of Faith (in Christ and the Cross) are blessed with Faithful Abraham. (He received Justification by Faith, and so do we!) (E.S.B.)

GALATIANS 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham (justification by faith) might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ (by His finished work); that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Abraham became the father of all who believe, the father of faith, so that “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”

Wuest comments on this subject as follows:

GALATIANS 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

“This is a definite statement of the proposition which Paul wishes to prove. The emphasis is upon the fact that the believing ones are blessed with salvation, rather than those who depend upon good works as the Judaizers did. The word faithful is added as a descriptive word in order to impress upon the reader that the important thing about Abraham was the fact that he chose the faith way of salvation rather than depend upon personal merit and good works. The word here does not speak of faithfulness of life in the sense of fidelity, but of the fact that Abraham believed God. And well might Abraham have depended upon good works, from a purely human standpoint. Excavations in the city of Ur where Abraham lived, reveal the fact that Abraham was not a wild desert sheik, but an educated, wealthy, sophisticated citizen of the world, a man living in and ostensibly partaking of a state of culture and opulence little dreamed of by the person who is unfamiliar with the ancient civilizations of the past. Abraham was no ignoramus with a gullible faith. With all his cultural background, and in spite of it, he saw that much of that with which we have to do, is taken upon faith, including the way of salvation. Those who exercise a like faith to Abraham, share with him in the same salvation which he received from God.”

*Translation. So that those who are believing ones are being blessed in company with believing Abraham.”*³

(underlines added)

“. . . Abraham became the father of all who believe, the father of faith, so that “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” . . .”

Actually Abraham has three different kinds of seed or progeny:

1. Jesus Christ - the Saviour (Galatians 3:16).
2. His physical seed – Israel (Genesis 12:2).
3. His spiritual seed - believing Jews and Gentiles who make up the Church.

To limit Abraham’s seed to any one of these is to limit or destroy the truth of the matter.

However *“the phrase “sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7) is not to be understood in a genealogical sense but rather in the ethical (and spiritual) sense of the term. Abraham was accepted by God on the basis of faith, and God deals with all men on the same moral basis. God is no respecter of persons. Thus the faith exercised by Abraham is declared to be the fundamental condition of acceptance with God.”*⁴

(bracketed phrase and scriptural reference added)

Therefore Paul concluded that the legitimate sons of Abraham, his authentic seed, are not his physical descendants but rather his spiritual ones - those who have been saved by faith.

Concerning the blessings of Abraham, there are both physical blessings promised to his physical seed, spiritual blessings promised to both his physical and spiritual seed (e.g. Deuteronomy 28:1-14), and the primary spiritual *“blessing of Abraham”* promised to his spiritual offspring i.e. justification by faith through the Blood of the Lamb.

GENESIS 17:8 And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land wherein you are a stranger, all

the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (the Jews, having forfeited their possession through rebellion against God, and especially their rejection of Jesus Christ, have caused a rupture; however, the Covenant still stands, and will come to full bloom in the coming Kingdom Age, which is not long off). (E.S.B.)

The land promised to Abraham and his physical seed, the people of Israel, as an eternal inheritance (Genesis 13:15), is not given to the Church or even the Old Testament Saints. Abraham's physical seed will inhabit Israel during the Millennium and for all eternity, to remind the whole universe of the people of the Lamb and of all He did to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The eternal inheritance of all the Saints, however, is the city not made with hands - the New Jerusalem.

“. . . Concerning the blessings of Abraham, there are both physical blessings promised to his physical seed, spiritual blessings promised to both his physical and spiritual seed. . . ”

The blessings commanded by God upon Abraham and his descendants were fully set out in Deuteronomy Ch.28 (because the Mosaic Law revealed the Abrahamic Covenant to a much greater extent). The curses which would come upon the people if they broke the sacred Covenant with God were also outlined. The Covenant gave not only a promise of provision but also a promise of protection if the people obeyed God and relied upon Him to be their “El Shaddai.” With disobedience, however, would come loss and destruction, for the enemy would then take advantage of the legal ground given to him to “*kill and steal and destroy*” (John 10:10).

From Abraham, the promises of the Covenant passed on to Isaac and then to all his seed for a thousand generations, meaning forever. The physical descendants of Abraham, those who obeyed the Old Covenant and held fast to it, were recipients of the blessings promised to Abraham.

However the spiritual seed of Abraham were also given the privilege of having access to his blessings through Christ his seed. The same condition applies today to those who would partake of these blessings - the condition of obedience. The Old Testament Saints were required to live in continual obedience to God's Word and will as set out in the Book of the Law and proclaimed by the Prophets. Not to do this would bring a curse. This is clearly announced in scripture (Deuteronomy 11:26-28; Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

Today the same principle holds. If we obey the Lord and walk according to His righteous standards, we will be blessed. If we disobey, we will lack - peace, provision, purpose, etc. With the provisions we, as His Body, have been given, there is no excuse for disobedience.

When Israel rejected the One sent, they excluded themselves from being connected to the True Vine of the New Covenant, being Christ (Romans 11:20). As Paul states, the natural branches of the good olive tree (representing Israel) were broken off through unbelief, and the wild olive branches (representing the Church, the body of those who accepted the Gospel) were grafted in.

God's purpose in establishing the Covenant with Abraham was to have a lawful channel through which He could bring Jesus the Saviour into the world. Truly it was the Gospel that God was speaking of when He told Abraham, *"and in you shall all families (nations) of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8).

Concerning the term "everlasting Covenant," God's Covenant with Abraham and his seed Jesus is an eternal Covenant.

"...God's purpose in establishing the Covenant with Abraham was to have a lawful channel through which He could bring Jesus the Saviour into the world..."

As Abraham *"believed God, and it was accounted (credited) to him for righteousness"* (Galatians 3:6), so the provision of salvation

through faith has been given as an eternal blessing to those who accept this gift through Abraham's seed Who is Christ.

God's Covenant with Israel is also eternal. Those left alive in Israel following the Battle of Armageddon will be restored to God when they repent and finally recognize and receive the Messiah they had rejected! God's promises never fail and in time, as Paul wrote, "*And so all Israel shall be saved*" (Romans 11:26), according to God's promises to Abraham (Romans 11:27-29). Israel rejected the Gospel. The Church has taken its place in proclaiming the Gospel and now stands in its place. Israel, however, has been blessed in regard to promise as a nation - to be restored to its earthly position of leadership in the Millennium. After this the throne of God will come down to a renovated earth which has been cleansed of evil by fire. Indeed the Kingdom of God will be both spiritual and eternal, with "*no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:4). It will rule over all things spiritual and physical. Israel will, however, continue to exist as a distinct and unique nation forever (Ezekiel 37:24-25).

The Covenant which God made with Abraham was a forerunner of the Covenant of Redemption while Abraham was still operating under the Covenant of Atonement (which had sacrifices that could not bring redemption). But many promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are ours today and are vital to our understanding of our Christian inheritance. We too enter into this Covenant by faith, and we too receive God's promises by faith, as we walk by God's grace in obedience to our Covenant with God. Abraham is thus our mighty example of faith, the scriptures calling him "*the father of all them who believe*" (Romans 4:11).

“. . .The Covenant which God made with Abraham was a forerunner of the Covenant of Redemption while Abraham was still operating under the Covenant of Atonement. . .”

Indeed Abraham received God's promises "through the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13), not by the works of the Law. God promised that he would be the father of many nations, and even though he was childless and well advanced in years, Abraham believed God.

ROMANS 4:18 *(Abraham) Who against hope believed in hope (a description of Abraham's Faith, as it regarded the birth of Isaac: E.S.B.), that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken (to him by God), "So shall your seed be." (Genesis 5:15)*

ROMANS 4:19 *And being not weak in faith (but strong), he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb (she was past the age of child-bearing - Genesis 17:17; 18:11):*

ROMANS 4:20 *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief (his faith did not waver); but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

ROMANS 4:21 *And being fully persuaded that, what He (God) had promised, He was able also to perform.*

ROMANS 4:22 *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness (simple faith in God gave Abraham imputed righteousness).*

ROMANS 4:23 *Now it was not written for his sake alone (his faith being an example for us to follow), that it was imputed to him (i.e. his righteousness);*

ROMANS 4:24 *But for us also, to whom it (righteousness) shall be imputed, if we believe on Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;*

ROMANS 4:25 *Who was delivered (to the cross) for our offences (our sins, for He had none), and was raised*

again for our justification (we too are raised in “newness of life”).

We are heirs of the Covenant God made with Abraham because we are in Christ and He in us. As wild olive branches, we have become grafted into the good olive tree by grace through our faith in Christ. As such, we become spiritual descendants of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise (Romans 11:17-20). We become, by and through faith, the children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7-8), for by our faith, we also have righteousness imputed to us. However, while the sign of a “covenant man” under the Old Covenant was physical circumcision, the sign of a “covenant man” under the New Covenant is the circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:28-29).

ROMANS 11:17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and you (the Church, i.e. the Gentiles), being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree (means that the Church derives its life from the common Root that was originally given to Israel of long ago) (E.S.B.)

Rossier says of this verse:

“Again, the analogy “some of the branches” (tines ton kladon) represents that part of the nation of Israel which refused to accept the Messiah. The addition of the olive tree to the metaphor makes it even easier to identify the allegorical language. Apparently the common horticultural practice was to graft branches from a cultivated olive tree into a wild one. In this case, however, God did what was “contrary to nature” (para phusin - v.24) by grafting a “wild olive branch” (agrielaios) into the tree to invigorate the tree. The wild olive branch must be a reference to the Gentiles who were grafted in so they could partake of the nourishment that comes from “the root” (tes hridzes).

“. . .As wild olive branches, we have become grafted into the good olive tree by grace through our faith in Christ. . .”

This language sounds very much like Jesus' reminder that He is the vine, the Father is the farmer, and believers are the branches (John 15:1-5). As branches, if we do not abide in the vine, we will die and have to be removed (John 15:6). The same thing happened to some of the natural olive branches (Jews) who thought they possessed spiritual life merely because they were Abraham's progeny. They were not, however, really participating in the life that belongs to "the root" (God Himself) because they were trying to be justified their way - by works rather than by grace through faith." ⁵

THE COVENANT OF ATONEMENT

Background Reading: Exodus 24:3-8

The Covenant of Atonement in Old Testament times, as we have learned, provided for the sacrificial offering of animals to atone for or cover the sins of the people who operated according to that Covenant. This kept eternal death at bay but could not pay the supreme price required for man's redemption. It was also a means by which God could keep His chosen people holy unto Himself. The Covenant of Atonement covered the whole period of the Old Testament, being witnessed in the lives of Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Job and so on. However it came to be understood much more fully when it was revealed in its entirety to Moses (Exodus 24:4-8), for the Lord revealed the detailed laws of the blood sacrifices to Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses then delivered these laws to the people. It was to Moses that God gave details of all the laws and ceremonies necessary to keep the nation of Israel spiritually clean, holy and separate unto Himself. His primary reason for doing this was so that He could bring the Saviour into the world through this nation. The Covenant of Atonement foreshadowed that which was to come, the shedding of the Blood of the Lamb of God for the sins of mankind.

In the meantime, the Covenant of Atonement prevented death from claiming eternal rights to the people who lived under this Covenant. It could not, however, break the power of sin. Indeed spiritual death was still lodged in the hearts of the people operating under this Covenant, and because of the inherited sin nature, neither Abraham nor any of his ancestors or descendants could keep all of

the commandments of God. For example, we see Noah undertake one of the greatest acts of faith the world has ever seen, only to follow this up by becoming drunk (Genesis 9:21). To deal with this sin problem, God brought the Priesthood into existence. The Mosaic Law was instituted to reveal God's ways and to point out sin, providing the people with boundaries (Galatians 3:23-24). The Priesthood was instituted to present offerings for the atonement of sin. In all this, everything the priests did in the ceremonies pointed to Christ Who was to come. The Law and the sacrifices made it possible for the people to maintain their covenantal relationship with God, thus also making possible the fulfillment of the Messianic promise.

“ . . . The laws handed down to Moses by God on Mount Sinai were not part of a new blood Covenant. Rather they were an “amplification” of the Abrahamic Covenant. . . ”

The laws handed down to Moses by God on Mount Sinai were not part of a new blood Covenant. Rather they were an “amplification” of the Abrahamic Covenant, and a detailed account of how the Israelites were to “*walk perfect*” (blamelessly) before God.

The Law of Moses illuminated the Abrahamic Covenant, showing in detail the righteous standard of God for man. This in fact showed the hopeless condition of man, because he could not fulfill these righteous standards in himself. But God did not leave it there. The Law then pointed to the Cross in the type-patterns used in the sacrifices for sin. Indeed there was darkness in the mind of man regarding many kinds of sin until God revealed His righteous standards through the Law. While the Covenant of Abraham emphasized God's promise, the Sinai renewal stressed the responsibility of man. It also revealed the hopelessness of man, for man without God's grace and empowerment will sin - and thus break the Law. Another purpose of the Mosaic Law was thus to reveal to man his utter inability to keep God's righteous standards. Man's only hope then would be to throw himself on the mercy of God - and

be thus directed to the Cross. Everything, the blood sacrifices, the Law, the Priesthood and all the ceremonies therefore pointed, in their type-patterns, to Christ the Saviour and Redeemer.

THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION

Background Reading: Hebrews 10:9-21

The shedding of the blood of bulls and goats paved the way for the supreme sacrifice, that being Jesus, the Lamb of God. Without spot or blemish, Jesus, the innocent and perfect man, became the Lamb of God Who took away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Such was His substitutionary death.

On the altar of the Cross, Christ the innocent Lamb was offered up for sacrifice, and His Blood was shed. Death claimed its victim or so it thought. For three days and three nights His physical body remained motionless in death. But on the third day Jesus rose from the dead, having the keys of death and hell, and triumphing over all His enemies (Colossians 2:15). It was Jesus Who appeared to the Apostle John, as recorded in Revelation 1:18, saying, *“I am He Who lives and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”*

Jesus became the sacrifice to end all sacrifices, fulfilling the Covenant of Atonement and establishing forever the Covenant of Redemption. His sacrifice was perfect, unique and unrepeatable, the sign and seal of the ultimate Blood Covenant between God and man, in which man was restored to his Maker.

“ . . . His sacrifice was perfect, unique and unrepeatable, the sign and seal of the ultimate Blood Covenant between God and man, in which man was restored to his Maker. . . ”

We enter into a Covenant relationship with God through God-given faith in the Blood of Jesus - for at the Last Supper, during the Jewish feast of Passover, Jesus took the cup saying, *“ . . . Drink ye all*

of it; For this is My Blood of the New Testament (New Covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28).

God ratified the Covenant of Redemption with the Blood of His only Son. That Blood became the legal agent by which the spirit of the sinner can be separated from the stain and the power of sin. The Blood of Jesus did not cover sin or offer atonement - as the blood of bulls and goats had done. Rather it provided the means by which sin could be forgiven, so that man’s spirit could be cleansed of sin’s darkness by the Light of God’s presence. Then the Divine Nature is imparted by Divine connection. The energies and graces of God’s Divine Nature enable the sinner to be released from the bondage of sin conditionally as he or she seeks the Spirit’s leading and then yields to Him.

The Mosaic Law could only point out sin. It could not deal with it, being powerless to help man who was depraved and subject to the sinful nature. However we find in Romans 8:2-4 that:

“God condemned sin in the flesh, a thing which the law could not do in the sense that Christ by His sinless life in our nature condemned our sinful lives, and left us inexcusable and without hope . . . God’s condemnation of sin is expressed in His sending His Son in our nature, and in connection with sin that He died for it - i.e., took its condemnation upon Himself. Christ’s death exhibits God’s condemnation of sin in the flesh. The words ‘in the flesh’ are to be construed with ‘condemned’: the flesh - that in which sin had reigned - was also that in which God’s condemnation of sin was executed. But Paul does not mean that by His sinless life in our nature, Christ had broken the power of sin at one point for the human race; he means that in the death of His own Son, who had come in our nature to make atonement for sin, God had pronounced the doom of sin, and brought its claims and authority over man to an end” (Denney).⁶

(underlines added).

So God condemned sin in the flesh through Christ’s sinless life. Vincent (Marvin R. Vincent, D.D., Word Studies in the New Testament) states that “condemned” in this context refers to sin being deposed from its dominion. This was impossible for the Law, which could pronounce judgement and inflict penalty, but not dethrone.

However through the finished work of the Cross and its provisions, God is able to dethrone the sin nature in the lives of Believers, providing them also with the empowerment of the Divine Nature to walk in Christ's righteousness. Thus Jesus exposed the darkness in which man lives, condemning sin through His holy character. The light Jesus walked in revealed the darkness for what it was, and man's unsaved and unholy condition for what it was. He now calls us to come and walk with Him in the light, and empowers us to do so as we yield to Him, with the resurrection power of God's Divine Nature at work in our hearts.

“. . .It is interesting to note that when God was establishing His Covenant with Abraham on the earth, He was making the same promises to Christ. . .”

The New Covenant provides us with everything that pertains to life and godliness - the new birth, redemption from the curse, the empowerment of God, the cleansing of the spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the wisdom of God, the mind of Christ and “newness of life” - which means we have been raised with Christ, being now partakers of His Divine Nature by which we can live righteously. Therefore we have been given every means by which we can walk in victory over sin.

It is interesting to note that when God was establishing His Covenant with Abraham on the earth, He was making the same promises to Christ. Galatians 3:16 tells us this:

GALATIANS 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, “And to seeds,” as of many; but as of one, “And to your seed,” Who is Christ.

So the promise of the New Covenant and its pledge of salvation were actually given to Abraham and also, many years in advance, to Christ. As Abraham's seed, Jesus fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant, and established it - but the New Covenant was

always firstly between God and Jesus, though we who are in Christ enter into this same Covenant.

GALATIANS 3:29 And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed (Christ is Abraham's Seed, so my union with Christ makes me Abraham's seed as well: E.S.B.), and heirs according to the promise.

Another version reads:

GALATIANS 3:29 And if you belong to Christ [are in Him Who is Abraham's Seed], then you are Abraham's offspring and [spiritual] heirs according to promise. (Amp).

Wuest writes concerning Galatians 3:29: *“The Judaizers taught that by becoming subjects of the Mosaic law, the Galatian Gentiles would become the seed or progeny of Abraham. Paul asserts that this privilege comes to one by faith in Christ. In Romans 4, Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith, and was thus constituted the spiritual father of all who put their faith in Christ, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised. God made salvation dependent upon faith in order that it might be available to both Jew and Gentile. Since Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers, this does away with the false Jewish notion that kinship to Abraham brings one into the divine favor and gives one salvation. By belonging to Christ, believers are also Abraham's posterity, for Christ is the seed of Abraham. Since believers have entered into relationship with Christ, they must consequently have a share in the same state, and must likewise be Abraham's seed.”*⁷

(underlines added)

We therefore become Abraham's seed, and heir to his spiritual blessings, when we receive Jesus as Lord and become clothed with Christ's righteousness. The promises God made to Jesus have now been given to the Believer, and we are heirs to the promises and the blessings of Abraham. (Note: We are not heirs to the physical blessing of the land of Israel, a promise which was given only to his physical seed). As joint heirs with Christ, we enter into this Covenant and receive the promises made to Him. He is our

righteousness and the means by which we can stand before God justified - and we enter into the New Covenant through Him. Believers enter into the promises by entering into Christ, thereby also becoming spiritual seed to God.

“ . . . We therefore become Abraham’s seed, and heir to his spiritual blessings, when we receive Jesus as Lord and become clothed with Christ’s righteousness. . . ”

Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law of sin and death by becoming a curse for us. Jesus, the innocent man, died and shed His Blood so that we could be freed from death through the grace and power of God, *“through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant”* (Hebrews 13:20).

Adam was, in the beginning, the representation of a living blood Covenant. The blood in Adam’s veins was the agent whereby he could be either blessed with spiritual life or cursed with spiritual death. Similarly, the Blood of Jesus is the agent whereby the blessings of God come through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (Romans 3:21-22). In Jesus there is no curse to our spirit. And soon even the last enemy, physical death, will be put away, and man will be freed from its grip completely.

As long as we remain in Christ, we are guaranteed a living Blood Covenant with God, our Heavenly Father. Through faith in the Blood of Jesus, we therefore become Covenant partners with God, the God Who can never lie and Who always fulfills His Word.

“ . . . As long as we remain in Christ, we are guaranteed a living Blood Covenant with God, our Heavenly Father. . . ”

An innocent and perfect man had to die on Calvary's altar so that we could "*walk in newness of life*" (Romans 6:4) and serve in "*newness of Spirit*" (Romans 7:6) - by the Holy Spirit's power. This was the ransom price for man's release from death's prison (Mark 10:45). So all who enter into this Covenant by faith are freed by the ransom price which has been paid, that being the shed Blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Now again there is life in regenerated man's spiritual veins, and death has no claim on those who have this life. Thus we who were bought from the slave market of death have become the bondslaves of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:22), now and forevermore. Amen.

GOD'S LAW IS CONTAINED WITHIN THE CONSCIENCE OF MAN

Background Reading: Romans 2:6-13

As we now know, in Old Testament times God established a Covenant with Israel and revealed His principles to them through the Mosaic Law. The rest of the world was, and is, in fact, under another law, whether they are aware of it or not. This law operates through the conscience of man. Certainly from the beginning, mankind was created with a conscience which, if allowed to do so, would convict him in regard to sin. For as we have learned, God's moral principles, also known as the spirit or intent of the Mosaic Law, are written on men's hearts. The conscience bears witness to this fact, operating by the thoughts of a man to either accuse him or defend his actions. If the conscience becomes seared or warped because of sin or the dictates of culture, the person concerned will not feel convicted of sin on a moral level, e.g. they may feel no guilt in regard to theft, adultery, or even murder, etc. So the conscience is not a totally reliable guide. Nevertheless the God-given ability to discern good from evil, right from wrong, was and is contained within the conscience, God's truths concerning moral standards having been written on the heart of man. And the very existence of the conscience (moral light) is evidence of God having implanted in man His basic moral principles.

It is not a matter of whether the conscience is allowed to function properly or not, for this is not an issue in judgement. Rather,

judgement is based on performance, i.e. whether the individual makes use of that which has been given. An example of this principle can be seen in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

Mankind was and always will be judged according to the light given to him - and this light, apart from God's revelation of Himself through His Word and creation itself, comes through the conscience. In other words, God's basic principles, or the basic elements of moral living contained in the Mosaic Law, were written on people's hearts from the beginning of mankind's existence. And the conscience will, if allowed, bring conviction in regard to moral issues, concerning whether something is right or wrong. We see these truths outlined in Romans 2:14-15:

ROMANS 2:14 (For when the Gentiles, who have not the Law (of Moses), do by nature the things contained in (required by) the Law (behave according to Godly standards), these, having not the Law (as directed by their conscience), are a law unto themselves (having been given a standard of right and wrong through their conscience):

ROMANS 2:15 Which show the work of the Law written in their hearts (means that no one, whomever they might be and wherever they might be, is absent of all Light), their conscience also bearing witness (but which can be seared), and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another (conscience does not prove a reliable guide, as is proclaimed here); (E.S.B.)

Therefore the Gentiles who did not know the Mosaic code, in exercising moral functions, showed that a law was implicit within them.

“ . . .the very existence of the conscience (moral light) is evidence of God having implanted in man His basic moral principles. . . ”

Man's conscience, at times, however, does not make him aware of sin. This can come as a result of cultural dictates, false teaching, habitual sin or environmental influences. In other words, the conscience can be warped if it is not allowed to function as it should. For instance, through committing habitual sin, some people yield willingly to the sin nature to the extent that they override their conscience to the point where they can sin without any sense of guilt. The more a person sins, the more that person's conscience will become seared or hardened so that they may reach a point where they feel no sense of guilt, even concerning serious sin. So there are people who can murder fellow human beings in cold blood without a second thought, feeling no guilt in regard to their actions. (Premeditated murder is to be distinguished from having to kill an enemy in war). Others allow Satan to pervert their thinking to the extent where they call good "*evil*" and evil "*good*" (Isaiah 5:20).

In such cases, man needs to be given an intellectual knowledge of sin in order to at least give the conscience a chance to begin to function properly again. This is one of the things God set out to do through the Mosaic Law.

Today the Word of God in its entirety reveals to man the full knowledge and extent of sin - so man is without excuse. As man allows the Holy Spirit to convict him of sin, he is given the opportunity to repent and lead a life transformed through the grace and power of God.

However, whether man recognizes that he is a sinner or not does not alter the fact of his accountability. This is because man has been given the means of salvation and is responsible before God to search for truth and to cross the bridge that God has provided. God has done all He can to deal with the terrible scourge of sin - it is now up to man to avail himself of God's gracious and wonderful gift (Luke 11:9-10).

Note: Today nearly all of mankind has opportunity to read, hear or become aware of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by some means or another. This being the case, while opportunity is available, if people do not seek and then receive God's free gift of salvation, they will be judged and found guilty as unrepentant sinners. Man must recognize he cannot earn his salvation, and is lost without a Saviour.

“ . . . Today nearly all of mankind has opportunity to read, hear or become aware of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by some means or another. . . ”

Now the scriptures state that man is without excuse not to believe that there is a Creator, for creation bears witness to the fact.

ROMANS 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them (speaks of the universal objective knowledge of God as the Creator, which is more or less in all men); for God has showed it unto them (means that His Signature is in Creation). (E.S.B.)

ROMANS 1:20 For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen (explains Verse 19), being understood by the things that are made (Creation demands a Creator), even His Eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (the Creation tells us of the Eternal Power of God, and is obvious to all): (E.S.B.)

PSALM 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament (their expanse) shows His handiwork.

Man only has to look up to the sky on a cloudless night with an open heart to know there is a God. This is because there is an inbuilt desire within man to seek his Creator so as to worship Him. If man opens up to this he will, as he seeks to find God, be taken by the Father to the Cross of Calvary - for God will move heaven and earth to bring the open, seeking heart to the knowledge of salvation (Matthew 7:7-8). Therefore man is without excuse not to believe that there is a God.

Note: The evidence of this inbuilt desire to worship the Creator is seen across the cultures where it is misdirected and twisted into the worship of false gods.

The Word of God also tells us that every man has been given “*the measure of faith*” (or access to “*the measure of faith*”) to believe there is a God (Romans 12:3). (This scripture also applies to the saved who are given both faith for justification and access to “*the measure of faith*” required for service and obedience.)

This “*measure of faith*” for the heathen is really an inward moral light, contained in the conscience, which gives man the ability to acknowledge a Creator.

Scripture also tells us:

ECCLESIASTES 3:11 He (God) has made every thing beautiful in his time: also He has set the world (eternity) in their heart . . . (In this Verse, the word “world” should have been translated “eternity.” God has made everything beautiful in its season and, at the same time, given to man the consciousness of “eternity.”) (E.S.B.)

Therefore man was created with “*eternity*” in his heart, which is the ability to know and acknowledge that there is life beyond death. This is spiritual knowledge or truth given by God, residing in the heart of man. This, combined with nature’s declaration that there is a God, a Creator, will enable man, with a proper focus and an open mind (or open heart), to have his God-given awareness activated. This proceeds from the “*measure of faith*” we have all been born with, but which is suppressed by sin or an improper focus. Once man acknowledges God the Creator, he is then responsible to seek for Him

“. . .Therefore man was created with “eternity” in his heart, which is the ability to know and acknowledge that there is life beyond death. . .”

Sin and an improper focus, as stated, will suppress but not extinguish this gift, this inward moral light, and man’s natural inclination is to seek out his Creator. Sin will stifle this inward motivation, however, and man can, through his own choosing, simply block off to the existence of a Creator. If man denies this part

of himself, he will do himself damage, for only through being open to this light can he discover God. The measure of faith is a measure of awareness of God supplied by God's grace. Man is therefore responsible for seeking truth, but he will not discover truth on his own terms, only on God's terms!

God reveals Himself to man as man is open and seeks. Man is responsible for seeking the answers to life, but those answers can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. Man cannot discover them any other way.

Our conscience should also tell us that our fleshly impulses are evil, and we need to repent - but we then also need a power to deliver us. Therefore if we are truly open and look at the things that exist, we would believe there is a God. The next logical step is to seek to know Him so we can be delivered from this evil within. If a person truly does this, they, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, will find Christ (Matthew 7:7-8).

Satan has, however, polluted God's previously perfect world and blinds men to the fact of their responsibility to their Creator, which is written on their hearts (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

God's sovereign grace allows man, through his conscience, when man is open, to be aware of certain truths and principles. Therefore the knowledge there is a God is instinctive in man - if he opens up to it. He is then responsible to seek His Creator in a progressive and ongoing way.

Satan tries to hinder man from taking up this responsibility. He, as head of the Kingdom of Darkness, is "father" to all those in his Kingdom. Because of this, he blinds man to the truth of his responsibility by promoting sin in his life so that his conscience becomes seared.

To remove the blindfold of deception and unbelief, man needs God's power. It is the Anointing of God which can enable a person to hear and receive the Gospel - God's New Covenant between man and Himself through Christ (Isaiah 10:27b). The Anointing impacts on the darkness that man is engulfed in and anaesthetizes it for that moment so that man can be given a chance to truly hear the truth as it is preached or shared. Without the Anointing, God's convicting power on the words, the spiritual power of darkness will block the person from hearing with his heart the message that would bring release from that darkness.

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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NOTES

NOTES

- 1 S.B.C. Vol.12, Romans, pg.384.
- 2 S.B.C. Vol.12, Romans, pg.393.
- 3 Wuest, K.S., Wuest's Word Studies From The Greek New Testament, Galatians 3:9.
- 4 Wuest, K.S., Wuest's Word Studies From The Greek New Testament, Galatians 3:7.
- 5 Rossier, A Study Through The Book Of Romans, pg.169.
- 6 Wuest's Word Studies From The Greek New Testament quoting James Denney, Romans 8:2.
- 7 Wuest, K.S., Wuest's Word Studies From The Greek New Testament, Galatians 3:29.

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