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Before the law was given to the people of ancient Israel at Mt. Sinai, a promise of greater value was pledged to Abraham hundreds of years earlier. It remained a mystery for generations; the Jewish religious leaders remained blind while the Apostle Paul revealed it. This mystery is the revelation of the greatest blessing of all time. God said to Abraham, the man of faith who put his trust daily in every word of God, **“through your offspring [seed] all nations of the earth will be blessed**, because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:18, Galatians 3:16).

For hundreds of years and for most of time, it was understood that Abraham’s descendants were only his DNA children who grew into twelve tribes and many nations. To compound the matter, ten of the twelve tribes were divorced from the covenant family because of their perpetual rebellious behaviour and considered for hundreds of years as outcasts. They were shunned by their brothers who remained in the family and treated as a people to be avoided and despised for they were considered a rejected people without hope of ever returning to God and receiving eternal life. The possibility of their return remained a great mystery.

These people believed that the covenant family had shrunk to just two tribes: Judah and Benjamin. Suddenly, the image of the prophecy of Abraham’s descendants as the dust of the earth, stars in the sky and sand on the shore would become a gross exaggeration. Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the house of Judah, commonly referred to as the Jews are a scattered people with a small land mass in the middle east. Has Satan overthrown the Almighty God and snuffed out the promise to Abraham that his descendants will be too numerous to count?

“I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if one could **count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted**” (Genesis 13:16).

“I will surely bless you, and **I will multiply your descendants like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore**. Your descendants will possess the gates of their enemies” (Genesis 22:17).

“Then the Angel added, “I will greatly multiply your offspring so that **they will be too numerous to count**” (Genesis 16:10).

If the Jewish religious leaders at the time of Jesus on earth had listened to him, they would have understood the scriptures in Genesis of the immense blessing that was promised to Abraham. Instead, they fought against him to witness in 70 A.D. the complete destruction of their people, which led again to the death of many, a scattering and slavery for the captured.

The door was closed to the Jews to take the gospel to the world and while they plotted against the Romans for their freedom, the baton was passed to the Christians who were from the divorced house of Israel. These people had suffered for hundreds of years living among the Gentiles; they had become Gentiles. They were ready to return to their God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Humbly and with much gratitude, they took the baton and learned from the Apostle Paul the mysteries hidden in the scriptures. During the early years of the Christian church, they understood how their return into the covenant family was made possible and the great plan that included all of mankind in God’s royal and holy eternal family.

Along the way over the past 2,000 years, the understanding of the great mysteries became lost but into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all of them have come to light. Abraham’s descendants are more than the two tribes in the house of Judah, but include the grace-embracing ten tribes of Israel and soon, all of mankind under the rule of Jesus Christ will be globally invited into God’s royal and holy eternal family. There will be countless people from all periods of time, from different families, tribes and nations, with different languages, skin color and culture. They will turn to their Creator and bend their knee, willingly. What scriptures reveal the journey of this wonderful event?

This story begins with Abraham, a great man of faith (Hebrews 11) and eternal trust in God. He was listening to God for quite a while. In those days, the angel of God and other angels would appear in the form of men. God, himself, could be heard from above heaven. It was a time when the heavenly rulers over the nations [Deuteronomy 32:8] were visible, their judgments felt, and their great power exercised in full force.

God, our Father in heaven was painfully saddened when His once trusted heavenly council members given rulership over the nations, turned against Him (Ezekiel 31:15). It wasn’t until He saw Abraham, then Isaac and finally Jacob that His heart felt healing. Though surrounded by wickedness and the emptiness of God’s word, a family appeared, one willing to listen and obey God. “There he found **Israel** in a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste [a

place raging in wickedness]. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye (Deuteronomy 32:10). These people and their descendants became His people. "For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance" (Deuteronomy 32:9). While heavenly rulers were given to the nations, God's inheritance are the descendants of Israel; He is their heavenly ruler.

Abraham began the process of saving mankind. Through him all nations would be blessed. Through him a son would be conceived and born of a woman in the tribe of Judah, Abraham's great grandson hundreds of years later when the time was set. This son is both Son of God and Son of man through the lineage of Abraham.

"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to **your seed**," meaning **one person, who is Christ**" (Galatians 3:16).

This was the first promise made to Abraham; the promise of a Savior and the gift of God's grace. God made this promise when the earth was held captive by rogue heavenly rulers over the nations and wickedness had engulfed mankind. In the midst of this horror, a promise was made that God would provide a means of escape from slavery to being free with a new beginning into a new person.

In the story of mankind, imagery was built into the scriptures that opens the window into God's grand plan and His view from above heaven. The Apostle Paul tried to reveal the imagery. "**These things may be taken figuratively, for the women [Hagar and Sarah] represent two covenants.** One covenant is from **Mount Sinai** and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the **Jerusalem** that is above is free, and she is our mother" (Galatians 4:24-26).

From the beginning of Abraham's life, the story of redemption was written. Christ was born on earth from the seed of Abraham. His sacrifice releases all of mankind from the penalty of sin, death. His accepted sacrifice made possible the receiving of God's grace and His Holy Spirit. God's spirit transforms the hardened heart of mortal man into a warm heart of flesh—people desiring to obey God and a people now able to understand God's word and live His way.

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise**" (Galatians 3:26-29).

Without this redemption plan, all of mankind remains a slave to sin constantly breaking God's eternal law and sentenced to death because it is impossible to live God's laws of love without His Holy Spirit. God's eternal structures all hang on His laws and will never be abolished; mankind's traditions and added laws will be removed and come to an end. As repentant

mankind grows into spiritual maturity, God's grace protects them from death for mankind was created to grow like a new born into adulthood—another image by God's grand design. Once fully mature and transformed into eternal life, death will have no power because righteous transformed mankind will always choose the right way. They will eternally follow and lean on Christ, their beloved friend and husband.

Sarah is pictured as Jerusalem, the mother of the free. She images the faithful church that Christ will marry and together, they will co-rule as King and Queen over heaven and earth. The Apostle Paul revealed that great mystery to the Ephesians, **“This mystery is profound, but I am speaking about Christ and the church”** (Ephesians 5:32). That is why marriage was made part of everyday practice between a man and a woman on earth by God—to picture the relationship of Christ [the man] with his church [the woman] and that they would become one body—a unified body with Christ as the head and the faithful men and women of his church would be his body. **“For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”** (Ephesians 5:31). It was all planned before the creation on earth. The greater story mirrors the movements on earth.

The story of Abraham's descendants is filled with drama, love and hatred, loyalty and deceit, passion and treason, yet God kept His promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as the stars in the sky, sand on the shore and dust of the earth. Billions of people inhabit the planet today, all who repent, accept Christ as their Savior, are baptized and accept God's grace and His Holy Spirit are Abraham's children with many thanks and much gratitude to a humble and loving Son of God and a long suffering and enduring Father in heaven.

The first promise is being fulfilled. Two mysteries revealed by Apostle Paul are identified in this study mirror key pieces of God's plan for mankind on earth. For the remaining mysteries, read “God's Mysteries” at <https://www.sharingsharpens.ca>.

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