

**Introduction:** The detailed history of the line of The Messiah begins with the seven-fold Word of Yahweh to Abram: the exalted father. (*Genesis 12:1-3*) \*\*\* First, Yahweh said He will make Abram a great nation – Israel (*verse 2a*). He will bless (enable with power for wealth, success and family) Abram (*verse 2b*). He will magnify his name (*verse 2c*). In the middle, Abram is commanded to BE a blessing because of what Yahweh has given him, literally: so that you should BE a blessing (*verse 2d*). Fifth, I will bless those blessing you (*verse 3a*). Those cursing you, I will curse (*verse 3b*). Seventh, and finally, and they have been blessed in you all the families of the ground (*verse 3c*). \*\*\* This last word goes back to the creation story of two weeks ago. The first man was taken from the dust of the ground. He and his descendants were to cultivate and keep God’s very good creation, working under The Covenant God to perfect it with His direction and leading. But this was disrupted by the disobedience of the man and his wife. \*\*\* Now Yahweh is calling one man, the head of a large household (*Genesis 14:14*), to restore His blessing to every family taken from the ground, all those descended from the original man. \*\*\* Our Genesis passage this morning is a Word from Yahweh to Abram that from his body would come forth countless descendants. \*\*\* Our Gospel passage tells us that the prophet who prepared the way for Messiah exhorted crowds of people coming to be baptized for repentance that God could raise up these descendants of Abraham even from stones! \*\*\* This is reminiscent of The Word of Yahweh through Ezekiel: I will put a new spirit in them and remove from them their heart of stone. (*Ezekiel 11:18-20*) \*\*\* Now, let’s look closer at our passages.

**I. As Abram doubts, Yahweh gives him a Word he believes.** (*Genesis 15:1-6*)

A. Yahweh is Abram’s shield, but he says I am childless. (*Verses 1-3*)

1. After Abram rescued Lot (‘covering’) Yahweh spoke to him in a vision: Fear not, I am your shield and your reward will be very great. (*Verse 1*)

**Shield:** This is a battle shield that protects the upper body. Abram’s heart and lungs (breath) are safe.

**Reward:** Is a wage paid for work. Abram will be generously and graciously rewarded for his work of reverent obedient faith.

2. Abram said, Adonai Yahweh, I am going childless, and the son of acquisition (is) my heir. (*Verse 2*)

**Walking:** Abram has walked on the earth 85 years (*Genesis 12:4; 16:3*) and he still has no child.

**Eliezer:** His servant is a foreigner from Damascus named ‘God (is) my helper’, using the creator Name of God, not the covenant relationship Name. (But see *Genesis 24*)

3. Behold! You have given no offspring to me; behold, the son of my house is my heir. (*Verse 3*)

**Heir:** Abram is expressing doubt in God’s long-delayed Word. He is old enough that his servants have given birth to servants. Eliezer is a second generation servant.

B. Yahweh told him, descendants from you will outnumber the stars; Abram believed and was imputed to him righteousness. (*Verses 4-6*)

1. Behold! Yahweh’s Word to him: This man will not be your heir; but, one who will go out from your inner parts, he will be your heir. (*Verse 4*)

**Word:** This is a specific Word from The Covenant God, and it will come to pass.

2. Having brought him outside, He said: Give regard to the heavens and number the stars (if you are able to number them), so will be your descendants. (*Verse 5*)

**Stars in sky:** Three thousand stars can be seen by the human eye. With a telescope, 30,000 stars can be counted.

The Milky Way galaxy has 200 billion stars. It is estimated the total stars in the universe number one with 25 zeroes after it! (<https://answersingenesis.org/astronomy/stars/counting-the-stars/>)

**Descendants:** Abram had only one grandson (Jacob-Israel). But Jacob-Israel had twelve sons, starting the exponential growth of Abram’s descendants.

3. Then Abram believed (firmly trusted) Yahweh, and He reckoned it to him: righteousness. (*Verse 6*)

**Imputed:** Yahweh imputed to Abram righteousness, responding to Abram’s faith by thinking of him in a new way: righteous. The gift of righteousness by grace came from his firm faith in Yahweh’s Word. (*2 Corinthians 5:14-21*)

**Application:** May we commit our entire life (heart, mind and desires) to believe in and act on every Word of God, especially when it seems impossible

*Righteousness is a gift of faith*

**II. John the Baptist tells the crowds to make fruit worthy of repentance because God can turn stones into Abraham’s sons.** (*Luke 3:7-9*)

A. Flee wrath, making fruits worthy of repentance and don’t say, Abraham is my father. (*Verses 7-8*)

1. John keeps saying to the crowds coming to be baptized by him: You generation of vipers! (*Verse 7a*)

**Snakes:** Two weeks ago we saw the serpent tempt Adam’s wife so they both disobeyed God. (*Genesis 3:1-7*)

In the end we are told that the serpent who accuses people is the Devil. (*Revelation 20:2*)

The Baptizer is saying people are still under the influence of the serpent, the Devil. (*1 John 5:19*)

2. Who has shown to you all to flee from the coming wrath? (*Verse 7b*)

**Wrath:** God always reacts to sin and rebellion with great burning anger and wrath. We must never forget He is the righteous judge!

3. Therefore make fruits worthy of repentance. (*Verse 8a*)  
**Repent:** The first step to becoming a child of God, reconciled to Him as Abraham was, is to turn from our own ways and desires, and turn to Him in surrendered obedient faith.  
**Worthy fruit:** The evidence that people have repented is that they are bearing good fruit, worthy of who God IS, and all His gracious actions. (*John 15:1-17*)
4. And you should not begin to say in yourselves, we are having Abraham father. (*Verse 8b*)  
**Not genetics:** Human pride and laziness wants to believe that mere genetics gives us favor with God. The prophet is saying heritage makes no difference whatsoever!
5. For I am saying to you: God is able, out of these stones, to raise up children to Abraham. (*Verse 8c*)  
**God's work of grace:** People only become God's children, spiritual descendants of Abraham, by grace through faith. (*Romans 4*, especially *verses 18-25*) Therefore, let us give over the 'rocky places' of our heart to God so we are filled by His Spirit.

**God can create children of faith from stone**

- B. Every tree not making good fruit is into the fire being thrown. (*Verse 9*)
  1. But now also the axe, to the root of the trees, is being laid. (*Verse 9a*)  
**Danger:** Trees not bearing fruit are in great danger. Jesus told a parable about this: When a man's fig tree did not bear fruit for three years, he told his manager to cut it down; but the manager asked to cultivate and fertilize it for one more year before he cut it down. (*Luke 13:6-9*)  
 Do we realize we have a limited time to bear lasting fruit for our Lord and Savior?
  2. For, every tree not making good fruit is being cut down and into the fire is being thrown. (*Verse 9b*)  
**Cut down:** Each and every one of us will be judged for how we are living our lives. Have we chosen to commit ourselves to work for God to bear the fruit of other people living changed lives because they have received The Good News of Jesus? Or have we chosen to do our own thing and not go all out to serve God every day? We are all responsible for, and will be judged by, our choice. (*Hebrews 9:27-28*) Elijah demonstrated this choice to idolatrous Israel. (*1 Kings 18:16-40*) Before then, when the twelve tribes had been settled in the land promised to Abram, Joshua gave them a history lesson before presenting to them their clear choice. (*Joshua 24:1-15*)  
**Application:** May we all fear the dreadful wrath of God to repent of and turn from any areas of sin in our life, both actions and attitudes.
- C. Become God's children: Gospel and New Testament. (*Various*)
  1. But to as many as received Him, He gave the power to become children of God, to those continually believing in His Name. (*John 1:9-13*)  
**Receive and believe:** God's children must first be humbled of pride to receive His Son, The Savior. Then every minute of every day for the rest of their lives they must live in joyful obedience to Him in humble child-like faith.

**God can create children of faith from stone**

2. Jesus says all who suffer with Him by faith are His children. Then, quoting Isaiah, He says He has trusted in Yahweh and has been given children by God. (*Hebrews 2:9-18*)  
**The faithfulness of Jesus:** The miracle of The Gospel of Jesus is that God gives The Faithfulness of The Savior to those who have been softened by suffering so they may become God's children IN Jesus.

**God can create children of faith from stone**

3. All who believe in Jesus become God's children and obey His commands to love both God and His children IN Jesus. (*1 John 5:1-5*)  
**Trust and obey:** Obedient faith in God and His LOVE given in His Son, gives His children victory over the ways of the people of the world still under the control of the evil one. (*1 John 5:19*)

**Bottom line:** Let us all determine to accept whatever God must do to break our heart of stone (*Ezekiel 11:18-20*) to be among those who come to God in obedient faith to become His true children, Abraham's descendants!

**God can create children of faith from stone**

**Conclusion:** Yahweh tells Abram that from his body will come out descendants more than the stars in the heavens. When Abram believed His Word, Yahweh considered this righteousness. Centuries later, the prophet John the Baptist proclaimed God could raise up children to Abraham from stones.

**God can create children of faith from stone**