

INHERITING THE WORLD

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Romans 4:13–16).

Jesus: God's only begotten son, Jesus, inherits *all things* created by his Father (Heb 1:2). This includes the restored millennial earth (Psa 2:7–9; Isa 11:6–9; 35:1–2; Acts 3:21) and the new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1).

Abraham: inherits *the world*: “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world . . .” (Rom 4:13 italics mine; cf. Acts 7:5; Gal 3:18; Heb 11:8). Note the inverted parallelism (ABA) of Romans 4: **A** faith in God's promise of a son (implied in Gen 15:4) and many descendants (15:5–6) is credited to Abraham's account as righteousness without works (Rom 4:1–8) or circumcision (4:9–12); **B** inheriting the world is the gift or reward promised for Abraham's faith (4:13–16); **A'** faith in God's promise of being the father of many nations (Gen 17:4–6), having many descendants (15:5–6), and a son (17:15–22) is credited to Abraham's account as righteousness (Rom 4:17–25). His inheritance or eternal reward is highlighted in the center (**B**). Now, let's look at each verse in Romans 4:13–16. *Verse 13:* God promised to give the world to Abraham as his inheritance not through obeying the Law but through a righteous act of faith. No such promise, however, is found in the OT. *Verse 14:* Demanding perfect obedience to the Law invalidates faith based promises. One way to make a promise worthless is to set impossible conditions for its fulfillment; e.g., “I will give you a new bike for Christmas if you can fly to the moon!” *Verse 15:* Law brings violation and God's wrath. If inheriting the world were based on obeying the Law, there would be no heirs because God the Father is angry. The promise of inheriting the world would remain unfulfilled. Inheriting the world, then, must be a gift of grace apart from any human merit such as obedience or good works. *Verse 16:* The promise of inheriting the world is certain of fulfillment because it's unconditional, based not on works or circumcision but on our faith and God's grace. The promise of inheriting the world is made “to all the descendants,” to both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Notice that the center has an ABB'A' pattern: **A** “His descendants” and “righteousness of faith” (v. 13) is parallel to **A'** “all the descendants” and “by faith . . . in accordance with grace” (v. 16) and **B** “the Law” (v. 14) is parallel to **B'** “the Law” (v. 15). The point of turning just past the center adds the promise of being a father of many nations (v. 17). Note that in this life God gave Abraham “no inheritance in it [Canaan], not even a foot of ground” (Acts 7:5) yet in the next life he will inherit the whole world (perhaps metonymy for ruling over all the people of the world as Joseph ruled Egypt for Pharaoh, Gen 41:41–44). The Abrahamic Covenant (12:1–3) is the foundation of all future covenants (Palestinian, Davidic, Mosaic, and New). He may have ruled over Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:19–31). His name will be great (Gen 12:2) and people will come from all over the millennial world to dine with him (Matt 8:11). He inherits much less than Jesus: he inherits the world but Jesus inherits “all things” (Heb 1:2). He may be one of “the kings of the earth” (Rev 21:24), perhaps ruling from the New Jerusalem (“he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” Heb 11:10), but Jesus is the King of Kings (Rev 17:14; 19:16). Apparently Abraham had the greatest faith, receives the highest reward, and is the greatest believer of all time (cf. John 8:53).

Abraham's spiritual descendants: are co-heirs with Abraham (Rom 4:14–16; Gal 3:29). This includes believing Jews and Gentiles: “in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Rom 4:16; cf. Gal 3:7–9, 18, 26–28). These spiritual descendants will share Abraham's rule over the nations of the millennial and new earth forever: “Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom . . .” (Dan 7:27).

Romans 4: the problem, so often ignored, to be resolved in Romans 4 is this: How can Paul use Abraham and David's faith in *non-salvation* promises (promise of a son, many descendants, and father of many nations to Abraham, 4:3, 17–23 and promise of forgiveness for confession of sin to David, 4:6–8) to support his doctrine of justification by faith in 3:19–31? To answer this we must understand three things. First, chapter 4 is a *digression* in which Paul shows how “the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets” (3:21). His witness from the Law is Genesis 15:4–6 and from the Prophets Psalm 32:1–2. Second, since Paul *cannot* prove justification by faith from the OT (it's not there, cf. “the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith” Gal 3:8a), he does the next best thing—he shows that the concept of imputed righteousness exists in the OT and was acquired by faith in God's *non-salvation* promises. And third, he argues *a fortiori a minore ad maius* (argument from the lesser to the greater): If righteousness was imputed for believing lesser (easier and less important) *non-salvation* promises in the OT (Gen 15:4–6), how much more will the righteousness of God be imputed for believing greater (harder and more important, cf. Matt 7:13–14; Mark 10:23–26; Luke 13:23–24; 1 Cor 1:23) *salvation* promises (the subject of Rom 3:19–31)? In other words, the righteousness credited to Abraham's account for believing *non-salvation* promises (+r) and the perfect righteousness of God credited for believing *salvation* promises (+R) are imputed in the same way—by faith through grace (3:22–24). There are, then, two kinds of imputed righteousness: (1) righteousness imputed for gifts or rewards and (2) the perfect righteousness of God imputed for justification (acquittal) and the gift of eternal life (cf. Rom 5:17–21). A defendant must be declared righteous before he can be acquitted. Now, after this lengthy digression on imputed righteousness, Paul resumes his discussion of justification by faith in 5:1–21.

Gentleness: Believers with a ‘heart’ or ‘spirit’ of gentleness (Matt 11:29; 1 Pet 3:4) will inherit the millennial and new earth: “Blessed are the gentle (Greek *praus* ‘gentle, mild’), for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). Jesus was gentle (Matt 11:29; 21:5) and gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22; cf. Col 3:12; 1 Tim 6:11). Gentle people are humble (Matt 11:29) and quiet (1 Pet 3:4). The apostles were as gentle as nursing mothers (1 Thess 2:7). The opposite of being gentle is bullying (Greek *plektes* ‘striker, brawler’ 1 Tim 3:3) and fighting (Greek *machē* ‘battle, combat’ and *machomai* ‘fight, quarrel’ 3:3; Tit 3:2). Just as Joshua gave the twelve tribes their inheritance in Canaan (the land and everything in it, Num 33:54; Josh 11:23), so Jesus will give his people their inheritance on the restored and new earth. God will make “all things new” on the new earth (Rev 21:5) and we will “inherit these things” (21:7).

Church Age believers: are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17; Eph 3:6; 5:5; Tit 3:7; Heb 6:17). Jesus will give portions of his inheritance (Luke 10:42; John 13:8) to his brothers and sisters for an eternal inheritance (Acts 20:32; 26:18; Eph 1:11; Col 3:24; Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 1:4). This inheritance includes houses and land to possess (John 14:2–3; Heb 11:9–10, 13–16; 12:22–23; 13:14) and kingdoms to rule over on the millennial and new earth (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Rev 21:24). Overcomers will receive authority to rule with Christ (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26–27; 3:21). So will martyred tribulational saints (Rev 20:4). And Jesus delegates the rule of the world to Abraham (Rom 4:13–16).

Inherit the millennial and eternal Kingdom of God: all saints from Adam and Eve will be resurrected, enter, inherit, and possess the millennial Kingdom (Isa 9:7; Dan 2:44; 7:22; 1 Cor 15:50). Surviving tribulational saints in mortal bodies with sin natures also inherit this restored Kingdom (Matt 25:31–34). And their inheritance is eternal since the millennial Kingdom is replaced with the eternal Kingdom (Dan 7:18, 27). It includes houses and land to possess (Isa 49:8b; 65:9–10; Zech 8:12). The basis of our inheritance is faith and righteousness (Matt 25:37, 46; Rom 4:16; James 2:5). The unbelieving and unrighteous, however, will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21).

Inherit the new earth: positional overcomers will inherit the new earth and everything on it (comp. Rev 21:1–5 with 21:7). Positional overcomers are believers “in Christ” (1 John 5:4–5; Rev 2:7, 11; 3:5).

Joshua as a type of Christ: as Joshua distributed the land of Canaan to the tribes of Israel (Deut 1:38; cf. given by God, Exod 32:13; Acts 13:19), so Jesus will give the saints of all preceding dispensations their inheritance on the millennial and new earth. And like Joshua, Jesus will rule over them. Jesus (*Iesous* in Matt 1:21) is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Joshua (*Iesous* in Acts 7:45 and Heb 4:8). Both mean ‘Yah Is Salvation.’