

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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July 04, 2021

Volume 41, # 27

Word and Scripture Study: ABBA

ABBA is an Aramaic word which the children of Judah picked up along with the rest of the Aramaic language while serving a seventy-year term of captivity in Babylonia (606 B.C. - 536 B.C.). The word simply means *father*, and it corresponds to the original Hebrew term *AB*. The ancient Hebrew pictograph (the head of the ox), means strength, combined with (the tent floorplan), represents the tent, house, or family. These pictographs are actually the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, corresponding to the English letters *A* and *B*. Putting these two letters together, and a word is formed, *AB*, essentially the first word of the Hebrew language: *father*. The combined pictographs define father as "the strength of the house"; likened to the tent poles which hold up the tent, thus the father holds up the family. *AB* and the later *Abba* are the normal words for the father of the household or for God as our Father. They are not terms of endearment, nor childlike communication (such as *dada*); however, neither are they formal words of designation. They are simply the normal terms for a father used by all age levels from childhood to adulthood. Further, there are many Hebrew and Chaldee names that begin with *AB*, such as Abraham (father of a great multitude) and Abimelech (my father is king).

AB is used in the Ten Commandments, and it is the subject of the fifth commandment. The first four dealt with Israel's relationship with God, while the final six deal with Israel's relationship to man. The preeminent commandment that starts this section of commandments (the beginning of the other side of the stone tablet) is: "*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you*" (Exodus 20:12). Here is a good example that *AB* is the word that God used to talk to the adults of Israel concerning their fathers. Let's recognize that the commandment is not given to children, who are neither under covenant commandments, nor accountable to the covenant, but that God is calling the accountable adult to "*honor your father and your mother*". Likewise, this important command is refreshed under the new covenant in Ephesians 6:1-3, where it is again applied to adult "*children*" (anyone that has reached the age of accountability), that speak and treat their parents who are "*in the Lord*" (both the parents and children being Christians "in the Lord") with "*honor*". The Hebrew "honor"

in the fifth commandment means "to make weighty or heavy"; this is the weight of respect that is due. And the obedience of the adult "children" to the father and mother "in the Lord", refers not to instructs like "don't touch the stove", for we are past that, we are Christians now, but the obedience and honor comes from the child's obedience to the gospel learned from their parents "in the Lord".

Transitioning to the Aramaic use of *Abba* in scriptures, the word is used three times in the New Testament text, once by Jesus and twice by Paul, and Paul's use of the term is likely a reflection of Jesus' statement. In Mark 14:36, on the night of His betrayal, Jesus prays in the garden, saying, *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."* Mark, a Romanized Jewish man, is the only gospel recorder who quotes Jesus saying *"Abba, Father"*. This is not Mark's way of translating Jesus' use of *Abba*, this is Jesus using both the Aramaic and the Greek word for father in His prayer. More specifically, Jesus said *Abba ó Patēr*, with the definite article, *ó*, used before *Patēr*, the Greek word for father; thus, Jesus literally exclaimed "Father, the Father". What can be reasoned from this? It is an emphatic statement that strongly affirms that He is a Son and must honor the heavenly Father with godly fear and through learned obedience. This is precisely what is addressed in Hebrews 5:7-8 concerning the prayers of Jesus in the garden, *"who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."*

Now, let's notice how Paul uses *Abba* in application of our own son-ship. In Romans 8:15-17, Paul explains to the brethren, *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."* Paul tells the Christian that, in Christ, they have not swapped one form of fearful bondage for another, but they were liberated from fear and bondage, they were truly free from sin now. Paul further describes the gift of the Holy Spirit, calling Him not the Spirit of Bondage, but the Spirit of Adoption; we have been adopted by God, and if adopted, then we are sons and daughters of God. And what better way to describe the depths of our adoption than to use the very words that Jesus used to call upon His father, *Abba ó Patēr*. Paul uses the exact words, including the definite article before *Patēr*. We cry out "Father, the Father". Now, why we would cry out these same words that Jesus cried during His distress is readily seen in the context, for Paul is dealing with our suffering as a Christian, and thereby, he envisions us as if also in the garden of betrayal, with evil foes around us. What a fascinating way for Paul to liken us to our Savior,

and in so doing, strengthens our fortitude, knowing that we stand with Christ, who also overcame the sufferings and distresses to be raised in victory and power.

Paul uses *Abba* again in Galatians 4:6, *"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'"* This time he does not relate the statement to the sufferings shared between Christ and Christian, but this time the emphasis is on the true son-ship of the Christian, as the next verse explains: *"Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."* Our adoption is fully realized when we can say *Abba, Father*, just as Christ, the *"only begotten Son"* (John 3:16), also said when He was on this earth. Christ's sacrifice has not placed us in the house of God as bound slaves, but as sons and heirs of the eternal inheritance of God.

- Tanner Campbell

The Gospel was Promised through the Prophets!

Romans 1:1-2 says, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,".

"Why was Paul so particular to affirm that the gospel to which he had been separated and which he preached had been promised in the Old Testament Scriptures? He would have the Jews know that the very scriptures on which they relied promised the gospel which he preached. In this letter, as well as in much of his other writings, Paul combated the professed Christians among the Jews who taught that the Gentile converts had to be circumcised and had to keep the law of Moses, else they could not be saved. They were willing enough for Paul to make converts among the Gentiles, if he would have them circumcised and require them to keep the law; but because he would not do so, these Judaizing teachers opposed him with all their might. They had drawn the idea that Gentiles could be saved only in subservience to all things Jewish. But Paul taught that Jew and Gentile stood on an equal footing before God, and that the prophets had so foretold."

- Robertson L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary On Paul's Letter to the Saints at Rome* (1945), p. 8.

A THOUGHT FROM ACTS 1

Luke continues his writing from what Jesus did and taught until He was taken up to heaven to focus now on the orders He gave to His apostles whom He had chosen. With

His resurrection from the dead clearly established by "many convincing proofs" (Acts 1:3), He could use them for the purpose He had trained them: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

With this power given from heaven, they were authorized and fully suited to carry out the commission they had been given by the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). There would be no lapse in their memories, no incorrect teachings, no mistakes and no differing doctrines to confuse and divide listeners throughout the world (John 14:26; 15:26), where they were commanded to eventually go. Preaching the gospel of Christ would be the means of making disciples wherever they went. When disciples are made, believers are made. Repentance would be required from all those who become believers (faith) followed by immersion in water in order to be saved (possess the remission of sins, forgiveness from heaven). These are the ones who shall be saved, according to Mark.

The teaching does not end at that point. The apostles were commanded by Christ to teach these obedient believers "to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). They were also required to proclaim that all who did not believe their message would be condemned (Mark 16:16).

Luke makes this great commission the starting point for what is known now as "The Acts of the Apostles," and his narrative gives the facts relative to how the commission was executed. We see in what the apostles did and taught very strict adherence to their Lord's orders as we are furnished the best exposition of its meaning.

Are you a disciple, a believer in Christ? Are you receiving the teaching of the apostles and observing all the commands they issued? Be careful to learn what the Lord expects from you in the pages of the New Testament. Be careful how you hear what men teach!

- Gary Smalley

* "Because Jesus is alive, I too, shall live!"

* "Be kind to unkind people: they probably need it most!"

* "As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in school!"

* "Are you standing on the promises or sitting on the premises?"

* "People spend too much time finding other people to blame, too much energy finding excuses for not being what they ought to be, and not enough energy make themselves into what they are capable of being!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)