

## The Abrahamic Inheritance was the Earliest Christian Hope

**Justin Martyr** (AD 100-165) Christian apologist in Rome (martyred by beheading)

*“What larger measure of grace, then, did Christ bestow on Abraham? This, namely, that He called him with His voice by the like calling, telling him to quit the land wherein he dwelt. And He has called all of us by that voice, and we have left already the way of living in which we used to spend our days, passing our time in evil after the fashions of the other inhabitants of the earth; and along with Abraham we shall inherit the holy Land, when we shall receive the inheritance for an endless eternity, being children of Abraham through the like faith.”<sup>1</sup>*

**Irenaeus** (AD 130-202), pastor of Lyon (martyred w/parishioners)

*“Thus, then, the promise of God, which He gave to Abraham, remains steadfast. For thus He said: ‘Lift up thine eyes, and look from this place where now thou art, towards the north and south, and east and west. For all the earth which thou seest I will give to thee and to thy seed, even forever.’<sup>(Gen. 13:14-15)</sup> And again He says, ‘Arise, and go through the length and breadth of the land, since I will give it unto thee’;<sup>(Gen. 13:17)</sup> and [yet] he did not receive an inheritance in it, not even a footstep,<sup>(Acts 7:5)</sup> but was always a stranger and a pilgrim therein.<sup>(Heb. 11:8-13)</sup> ... Thus did he await patiently the promise of God, and was unwilling to appear to receive from men, what God had promised to give him, when He said again to him as follows: ‘I will give this land to thy seed, from the river of Egypt even unto the great river Euphrates.’<sup>(Gen. 15:18)</sup> If, then, God promised him the inheritance of the land, yet he did not receive it during all the time of his sojourn there, it must be, that together with his seed, that is, those who fear God and believe in Him, he shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For his seed is the Church, which receives the adoption to God through the Lord, as John the Baptist said: ‘For God is able from the stones to raise up children to Abraham.’<sup>(Matt. 3:9)</sup> Thus also the apostle says in the Epistle to the Galatians: ‘But ye, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise.’<sup>(Gal. 4:28)</sup> And again, in the same Epistle, he plainly declares that they who have believed in Christ do receive with Christ the promise to Abraham thus saying, ‘The promises were spoken to Abraham, and to his seed. Now He does not say, “And of seeds,” as if [He spake] of many, but as of one, “And to thy seed,” which is Christ.’<sup>(Gal. 3:16)</sup> And again, confirming his former words, he says, ‘Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith are the children of Abraham. But the Scripture, fore-seeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, declared to Abraham beforehand, that in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which are of faith shall be blessed with faithful Abraham.’<sup>(Gal. 3:6-9)</sup> Thus, then, they who are of faith shall be blessed with faithful Abraham, and these are the children of Abraham. Now God made promise of the Land to Abraham and his seed; yet neither Abraham nor his seed, that is, those who are justified by faith, do now receive any inheritance in it; but they shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For God is true and faithful; and on this account He said, ‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth’.<sup>(Matt. 5:5 quoting Psalm 37:11) 2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, ch. cxix

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk. V, ch. xxxii