

Abraham's Four Seeds (Offspring)

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16)

Yahweh, Himself, is the one who gave Abram the name Abraham because Yahweh promised to make him the father of a multitude of nations (ethnicities) (Gen 17:5). Father Abraham's seed (offspring or descendants) must be organized into four categories to make sense of the totality of what the Bible teaches concerning his sons and daughters (Gal 3:7). They are: 1) biological/physical, 2) national/ethnic, 3) singular, and 4) spiritual (see chart below). Abraham's first offspring promise is found in Genesis 12:3. Paul provides the final revelation concerning Abraham's seed in Galatians 3 and 4. In Genesis 13:16, Yahweh promises to make Abraham's offspring as plentiful as the earth's dust. In Galatians 3:16, the Apostle Paul interprets that Abraham's offspring is singular. Abraham's offspring are plural when Yahweh refers to them as "the dust of the earth" and singular when he refers to them as "one."

Type	Scripture	Explanation
Biological/ Physical	Gen 16:15 Gen 21:3 Gen 25:1-2	Biological are all the sons born through Abraham's sperm (seed). This includes Ishmael, Isaac, and all the sons of Keturah.
National/Ethnic	Gen 12:3	National offspring are ALL the sons of Abraham that will make up the nation Israel.
Singular	Gal 3:16	Singular is the Christ; Jesus our Lord and Savior. Jesus is the one true, unique seed of Abraham. He is a descendant of Abraham but is in a category all to Himself as the divine Son of God.
Spiritual	Gen 15:6 Gen 17:5 Gal 3:6-9	Spiritual are the sons and daughters who share in Abraham's justifying faith in the promises of God. All those who believe the gospel of Christ for their salvation are spiritual sons and daughters of Christ and, by extension, Abraham. This is the true Israel of God.

Now, consider a few of Abraham's sons for clarity concerning his four offspring types. Hagar bore Abraham a son, Ishmael (Gen 16). He is a circumcised biological son, but God did not include him in the promise of being part of the great nation, Israel (Gen 17:15ff). Moreover, the OT provides no Scriptural evidence that Ishmael believed like his father, Abraham. He was a biological son but not a Jew.

Sarah bore Isaac to Abraham. He, the Child of Promise, was a circumcised biological son, like Ishmael, yet God included him in the covenant, while Ishmael is not. In Genesis 17:21, Yahweh says, "I will establish my covenant with Isaac." Isaac is the father of Jacob, who will get the new name, Israel. So, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham are the fathers of the nation Israel. The author of Hebrews writes about Isaac's faith in Yahweh and the covenant promises (11:20). Therefore, Isaac is a biological, national, *and* spiritual son of Abraham.

Isaac married Rebekah, and she bore him two sons, Esau and Jacob. In Genesis 25:23, Yahweh tells Rebekah two nations are in her womb. Before the sons were born, Yahweh had already chosen Jacob to be the father of the nation Israel. Esau was a biological offspring (Abraham was his grandfather), yet he forfeited the covenant promises.

On both Mary's and Joseph's sides, the lineage of Christ is traced back to Abraham (Mat 1:17, Luk 3:34), making Him a biological and ethnic or national son of Abraham. However, Paul does not appeal to that when he establishes Jesus as the Son of Abraham. Jesus is *the* seed (singular). He is the one and only Son of God who makes possible the blessing of being justified, declared righteous (remember the doctrine of Justification by Faith). God forgives the sins of individuals who believe in Christ and His work on the cross for their sins, declaring them to be righteous. Read Galatians 3:7-8 to better understand who Abraham's spiritual sons and daughters are.

In John 8, Jesus affirms the distinctions found in the chart above. Jesus tells a group of Jews that their father is the devil (8:44) and simultaneously confirms that Abraham is their father. He says, "If you were Abraham's children...you would do what Abraham did" (8:39). He also refers to Abraham as their father, stating in John 8:56 that Abraham is their father biologically and ethnically. Yet, spiritually, Abraham is not their father because God is not their Father. Jews who reject Christ are biological and national sons but not spiritual sons. Spiritual sons have experienced the birth from above. They believe in Christ and are the true sons of the Israel of God (Rom 2:9, 9:6; Gal 6:16).