

A NAME AND A DESTINY
A Devotional Meditation from
Genesis 12:1-17:27; Isaiah 40:27-41:16; Matthew 3:7-9; John 8:39; Romans 4:3;
Galatians 3:6; James 2:22-24
Albert J. McCarn
October 16, 2021

My mother took up the cause of uncovering our family's history in the 1970s. She succeeded in tracing our lineage back to North Carolina at the time of the American Revolution. In recent years, my niece, my brother, and myself have picked up where she left off. We know we are Scots, but that's all we knew until recently, when we found the names of our first American ancestors on a long list of emigrants from Clan Donald, one of the oldest and most revered clans of the Scottish Highlands.* We knew our ancestors had come from the island of Jura, and had emigrated in 1739 to North Carolina. The Clan Donald list confirms that and more. Now we know how our people connect with the long history of the Scottish people. The earliest records of Clan Donald date back to the 6th century. That means our people were already a people at the time King Arthur was navigating the transition from Roman Britain to Saxon England.



"The Last of the Clan," Thomas Faed, 1865
([Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow](https://www.kelvingroveartgallery.com/))

Can you imagine the tremendous peace and assurance that comes with knowledge of our collective identity, and my personal identity? Before this, I was just another individual among seven billion. Now I have a name and a destiny because I know who my people were, who they are, and how I can help shape who they will become.

My brother gets the credit for connecting us with Clan Donald. When he began investigating our Scottish roots, he learned how important the clans are to Scottish society and culture, both in Scotland and in the diaspora. Our family name is found in both Clan Donald and Clan Grant, so we could choose to affiliate with either. However, since clans tend to be inclusive, we could be accepted by any of the clans that appear in our family line. This is something Clan Donald explains on their website:

Clan Donald USA is an affiliation of persons who qualify by reason of blood, kinship, marriage or legal adoption. Name alone does not count. Clanship is a family matter that transcends nationality, and we regard ourselves as an extended family.†

* _____, *Possible Clan Donald Emigrants*, Vol 1, Clan Donald USA, September-October 2001.

† "The Proud History of Clan Donald," Clan Donald USA, 2021, accessed October 15, 2021 (<https://clandonaldusa.org/index.php/historical/history>).

This inclusiveness is biblical. We first see it in God's call to Abraham to leave his homeland and family and go to a new land. That call came after all of humanity collectively shook its fist at the Creator by uniting around the massive Tower of Babel. The leaders of the day built the tower as a means of enslaving humanity under a global system that demanded complete obedience. The One True God could not allow such a system to exist in rebellion against His divine order, so in His mercy He scattered the people across the planet and divided them into nations.

That was enough to prevent the global rebellion from reaching the level of Noah's day, but it was not enough to satisfy the Creator and Redeemer of humanity. That's why He commissioned Abraham to go after the nations and offer them a way to come back. If we look closely, we can see this in God's first recorded words to Abraham:

Then *ADONAI* said to Abram, "Get going out from your land, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. My heart's desire is to make you into a great nation, to bless you, to make your name great so that you may be a blessing. My desire is to bless those who bless you, but whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3 TLV)

God later explains His intent to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan, which we now know as Israel. The land is important; God says He cares about it (Deuteronomy 11:11-12), and He placed His Name there (2 Chronicles 12:13, Ezekiel 43:7), but land without people is empty and incomplete. That's why God sent Abraham to go after the nations and invite them to come home, not just to God's land, but to His heart.

Abraham was among the nations, but not part of any of them. He came from Ur of the Chaldeans, but did not identify as a Chaldean. He had lived in Aram, but he did not choose to be an Aramean. He fathered a son by an Egyptian, and received wealth from Egypt's Pharaoh, but he did not call himself Egyptian. His allies and neighbors were Hittites, but he did not want to be known as a Hittite. His nephew lived in Sodom, but he refused to take anything from Sodom. The priest-king of Jerusalem blessed him, and although Abraham gave him a tithe, he did not become a Jebusite.

In a sense, Abraham was in the world, but not of it. When the Bible first mentions Abraham's identity, he is called a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13). That's the name of his clan, derived from his ancestor Eber. It means "one from beyond," as in beyond the River Euphrates. Abraham had crossed that river when God called him, and in so doing had become a stranger in a strange land. He contributed to the prosperity and security of his neighbors, but he was not one of them. He could never be one of them, but oddly enough, they could all be one with him.

This is the beauty of God's redemptive plan, which we see in the sign of his covenant:

God also said to Abraham, "As for you, My covenant you must keep, you and your seed after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant that you must keep between Me and you and your seed after you: all your males must be circumcised. You must be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and this will become a sign of the covenant between Me and you. Also your eight-day-olds must be circumcised, every male, throughout your generations, including a house-

born slave or a slave bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your seed. Your house-born slave and your purchased slave must surely be circumcised. So My covenant will be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. But the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin—that person will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” (Genesis 17:9-14 TLV)

Did you ever notice that, at that time, Abraham’s household included only three people actually related to him? They were his wife, Sarah, his concubine, Hagar, and his son, Ishmael. Everyone else was an employee, a slave, or someone who had voluntarily chosen to affiliate with Abraham. God through Abraham gave them all the choice to join in this covenant of redemption and become a people and a nation with Abraham’s family.

This invitation to partake of the covenant is free to all, but it comes with responsibility. Some people in Yeshua’s day forgot the nature of that responsibility. That’s why his cousin John admonished them, saying:

“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance; and do not think that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’! For I tell you that from these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.” (Matthew 3:7-9 TLV)

If physical descent does not guarantee citizenship in the covenant nation Abraham fathered, what does? Yeshua tells us: “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham.” (John 8:39 TLV)

What did Abraham do? He believed God, and that belief, walked out in faithful obedience, was counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, James 2:22-24).

What are we to believe? That God is willing and able to redeem this whole sick world: all the nations, all the tribes, all the families. He has already paid the price with the blood of His Son, our Messiah. He invites us all to come into that plan. When we do, we become Hebrews, people in this world but not of it, taking responsibility to do the works of our father Abraham. That is how we cross over to the peace and assurance of our identity in Messiah Son of Abraham. Through Him we gain a name and a destiny because we know who our people were, who they are, and how we can help shape who they will become.