

Why Does God Refer to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

In about a dozen places in the Bible, the Lord God is referred to as the **God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** (e.g., **Genesis 50:24; Exodus 3:15; Acts 7:32**). This name of God emphasizes the covenant that God made with Israel and the Israelites' special place as God's Chosen People.

1. REAFFIRMING THE COVENANT ACROSS GENERATIONS

God repeated the **Abrahamic Covenant** to three successive generations: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all given the promise of land, many descendants, and blessing.

- **Abraham:** The Lord first calls Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan, establishing a covenant with him (**Genesis 12:1–3**).
- **Isaac:** God reaffirms the same covenant with Abraham's son, Isaac (**Genesis 21:12; 26:3–4**).
- **Jacob:** Later, God confirms the covenant with Isaac's son, Jacob (**Genesis 28:14–15**).

The Lord who established and ratified this covenant is rightly called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2. THE BURNING BUSH AND THE EXODUS

When God revealed Himself to Moses in preparation for bringing His people out of Egypt, He called Himself “*the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*” in **Exodus 3:15**. He also instructed Moses to identify the Lord by that name when speaking to the Israelites (**verse 16**). In this case, the name carries two vital implications:

First, when God identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He clearly distinguishes Himself from the gods of Egypt in whose land the Israelites dwelt.

Second, the reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob implies a reason for the exodus: the promise of land. God had vowed that the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would inherit a certain geographical area. God's faithfulness and Israel's blessing were directly tied to Israel's possession of the Promised Land, and the name God uses for Himself harkens back to the covenant with Abraham.

3. PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

Jesus alluded to God's burning-bush appearance to Moses and used God's name to teach a lesson on the resurrection to the Sadducees:

“About the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

As Jesus points out, the verb *am* is in the present tense; God did not say, “I was the God of your fathers.” He said, “I am their God,” showing that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive (in heaven) in Moses’ day.

4. PETER’S PREACHING IN THE TEMPLE

In **Acts 3**, as Peter preaches to the Jews in the temple, he refers to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a name that his hearers would have commonly used in their worship. Peter and John had just healed a lame man, who was now standing before them. Peter attributes the miracle to the power of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, working through Jesus. In other words, Peter was careful to link the miracle they had just witnessed to the one and only God of their fathers. The same God who spoke to the patriarchs was at work in their midst, and Jesus should get the glory.

In explaining the miracle of a lame man walking, Peter also sets up a bold contrast:

“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate... You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.”

— Acts 3:13, 15

The God whom the Jews purported to revere treated Jesus of Nazareth much differently than they had: God glorified Jesus, and they killed Him. As he closes the sermon, Peter reminds his hearers that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was fulfilling His covenant with them: “*You are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers*” (**verse 25**).

SUMMARY & FULFILLMENT

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has a plan for the ages involving a Savior who provides forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. That plan was set in motion when God called Abram and blessed him, and that plan was brought to fulfillment when Jesus died and rose again. Through the seed of Abraham, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob blessed all the nations of the world.