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THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad," John 8:56. This statement provoked the enemies of Jesus to pick up stones to throw at him, wondering how in the world Abraham could have possibly have met Jesus or even known about him. While it is true, Abraham never literally saw Jesus face to face, he did see His future arrival through someone Abraham did see face to face. Abraham saw a connection between his son Isaac and the promise God made that all future generations would be blessed through the further descendants of Isaac. The scriptures make clear many people who died before Jesus was born were able to see His future promises from a distance in the prophetic connections they interacted with and saw in their own lives. "All these died in faith, without receiving the

promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth," Heb. 11:13. Abraham saw the future coming of Christ in his son Isaac, rejoicing to see that day "from a distance." "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called,'" Heb. 11:17-18. Abraham was able to make a connection with Isaac with the promise God made to him that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him and his descendants. It's important to note, that many of the earliest generations of mankind on earth were looking with great anticipation to find the One God

promised to deliver them from their bondage in consequence to sin (Gen. 3:15). Abraham was descended from Shem (Gen. 11:10-32) who descended from Noah, whose father, Lamech, saw him as the great deliverer. "Now he called his name Noah, saying, 'This one will give us rest from our work and from the ground which the LORD has cursed,'" Gen. 5:29. When the Savior Jesus was finally born, Mary makes the connection all the way back to the promise made to Abraham, indicating that Abraham, himself, was looking in faith to Jesus' day. "He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever," Luke 1:54-55. What is amazing is the prophetic connection Abraham makes with his son, who perfectly applies to Jesus, in believing God was able to and very well may have to raise Isaac from the dead in order to fulfill His promise through him. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called.' He considered that God is able to raise people even from the

dead, from which he also received him back as a type," Heb. 11:17-19. While Abraham was able to look in faith at a distant future of an eventual Savior born through Isaac, there is no way he could have possibly predicted or anticipated the resurrection of Christ, yet he is pointing right to it in his own willingness to sacrifice his own son. One of the greatest statements of faith is uttered by Abraham to his servants on the way to the mountain where he has been instructed to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. "Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you,'" Gen. 22:5. Abraham is in quite the dilemma. In Isaac, Abraham sees all the hopes of mankind resting on him to bring a Savior. As Jesus states, Abraham rejoiced to look in faith to that day, and saw it and was glad. And then he is given a command that would seem to wreck and destroy those hopes and dreams. How does Abraham obey a command from the One who has promised so much, which, at the same time seems to destroy those very promises in the actual command? Abraham makes the faithful conclusion that God fulfills His promises, even if He

has to raise Isaac back from the dead after obeying God's command to sacrifice him! Wow. Abraham thought to himself, I can trust God's promises so much that I know I can safely follow through with this command which involves killing my son, because God would never lie or be unable to follow through with what he promised. God never said anything about bringing Isaac back from the dead. But Abraham trusted God could and would raise him back up to fulfill the promise, so he is willing to obey the command to sacrifice him. He believes it will all turn out all right, so he says we are both coming back after everything is said and done on the mountain. This brings me to a trying question. This demonstration of faith on the part of Abraham inspires me and also convicts me. It makes me question myself and ask the question Jesus made his enemies answer, are they like Abraham or like the devil? Do they trust and believe in faith like Abraham, or do they doubt and dismiss like the devil? "They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.'" Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a

man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father,'" John 8:39-41. When it looks like there is no possible way how things could work out all right, and obedience to God seems like it only complicates and makes the situation even more hopeless, do we do the deeds of Abraham or of someone else? Do we trust, God cannot lie and always fulfills His promises, so let's continue to obey and trust God in every turn, no matter how hopeless it begins to feel? Or do we dismiss His commands and choose self-reliance and self-help to save and better ourselves? It's a tough question. It's a tough decision to implicitly trust God no matter what, even when obedience to Him seems like it only complicates our situation even more. The blessed result is the peace and comfort to say as Abraham did, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son,'" Gen. 22:8. – Daniel Ruegg



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Bible Study Challenge

Exodus 12:21-22 *"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb. You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.'"* It is amazing how all throughout the Old Testament, there were constant pictures and themes of Jesus, which He was constantly fulfilling throughout His time on earth. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29. Jesus was constantly making references to these prophetic statements about Him to reveal He was the Christ the Old Testament was preparing the world for. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," Jn. 3:14. "I am the bread that came down out of heaven," Jn. 6:41. Take some time this month to go through statements like these that Jesus made and see how many references and pictures from the old testament you can find that show God was revealing Jesus the whole time!

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Ecclesiastes 7:11-22

"Wisdom along with an inheritance is good and an advantage to those who see the sun. For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent? In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider – God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything that will be after him. I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them. Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others."