

# Abraham's Faith

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony (Hebrews 11:1-2).*

THIS verse is telling us that faith is the certainty of the things we hope for, the proof of things we do not see and the confidence of their reality. Faith believes what we cannot see, hear, touch, smell or taste nonetheless to be real. It is also telling us that by faith, the men and women written about in the Bible achieved a good account from God.

Abraham's faith is mentioned several times in the Bible, and so it is worthwhile to consider his faith and what it can teach us. God told Abraham many things and made promises to him, that Abraham believed.

*He believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6).*

Abraham trusted God's word and never wavered, even though it took so long to be fulfilled and appeared impossible. In this article, we will consider three aspects of his faith.

## Leaving Home

Abraham left his home when God told him to. Let's think about what that would mean to us. Imagine we were told to just get up, take our families, leave our houses and friends, and go to a place we did not even know the name of, but would be shown when we got there. Would we feel comfortable leaving everything behind to go to a place we'd never seen? I for one would certainly not be too happy about it!



Yet we are given no indication that Abraham hesitated, though he had to leave behind all that was familiar. This is even more amazing when we consider that he wasn't a young man. We might consider taking on such a huge task if we were young and fit, but Abraham was 70 years old! He believed God, and he went.

## Promised a Son, and a Land

Another facet of Abraham's faith was that he believed that he would have a son, even though he knew that Sarai his wife could not have children. I think most of us would have questioned this part of the promise since it was humanly impossible. Again, Abraham did not waver in his belief. Even after ten years went by, he showed no disbelief, but he showed curiosity by asking how God would give him a son.

He also asked about the land God promised he would inherit. He asked:

*Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it? (Genesis 15:8).*

Please read on in Genesis chapter 15. In Biblical days men used this dividing of animals to reinforce covenants. They would then walk between the pieces as if to call on themselves the fate of the dead animals if they broke their agreement. In verse 17 we see that the glory of God, symbolised by a burning lamp, passed between them, showing that He was responsible for this covenant. Then God stated His covenant with Abraham:

*On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (v18).*

God used this situation to strengthen Abraham's faith, and we can ask God in prayer to strengthen our faith. A man appealed to Jesus to do exactly this:

*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24).*

God doesn't require blind faith from us. Like the promises to Abraham, the promise of His coming Kingdom on earth may sound fantastic by human standards, even too good to be true. But God always provides some proof for us to base our faith on and one of these proofs is fulfilled Bible prophecy. Just as God has foretold the future in the Bible; just as He has fulfilled His promises to date; so He will set up His Kingdom.

## Making a Sacrifice

A powerful demonstration of Abraham's faith is seen in the incident of God requiring him to sacrifice his only son.

*Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you (Genesis 22:2).*



We can read the account in Genesis 22. This was possibly the hardest test of all for Abraham's faith. But he was equal to the test and nothing, even this overwhelming request, shook his faith in God. Even though he thought Isaac was going to have to die, Abraham knew that God's promise of a multitude of descendants through Isaac would be fulfilled and some miraculous intervention would occur. We find the commentary in Hebrews:

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense (Hebrews 11:17-19).*

This test of Abraham's faith was important as it was a representation of what would happen

to God's own Son. The table below shows just some of the similarities between the two incidents.

When Isaac was expecting to die at the hand of his father, God called to Abraham and showed him a ram caught nearby. By this deliverance from death, Isaac was given back to Abraham as if he had been resurrected. The angel of God called to Abraham a second time and confirmed God's promises once more:

*By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice (Genesis 22:16-18).*

## Following Abraham's Faith

We can read in Paul's letter to the Galatians how this was a prophecy of the work of Jesus:

*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).*

The Bible tells us that when Jesus rules the kingdom of God, all people will be blessed – read Psalm 72. Paul continues to explain that, if we have faith in Jesus, we can be called children of God, and treated as heirs to the promises God made to Abraham:

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26, 29).*

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Sacrifice of Isaac	Sacrifice of Jesus
<b>Genesis 22:2</b> – Isaac was Abraham's only son of the covenant; Abraham loved him.	<b>Luke 3:22</b> – Jesus was God's only son of the new covenant and God loved him.
<b>Genesis 22:2</b> – The Land of Moriah was the place specified for Isaac's sacrifice.	Mount Moriah is where Jerusalem is now – where Jesus was crucified.
<b>Genesis 22:6</b> – Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice.	<b>Luke 23:26</b> – Jesus carried the wooden cross.
<b>Genesis 22:9</b> – Isaac would have been stronger than his elderly father but he surrendered to his father's will.	<b>Luke 22:42</b> – Jesus also surrendered to his Father's will by letting himself be sacrificed.
Isaac had done nothing worthy of death.	<b>Hebrews 4:15</b> – Jesus was completely sinless and did not deserve to die.