**Lesson: Children of Abraham**

Some will think this is a lesson about the Jews who descended from Abraham; well, it is partly about the Old Testament Jews. It is also about the New Testament Christians, who are children of Abraham insofar as they possess the same kind of faith as Abraham. Both testaments declare that we are justified by faith (GEN 15:6; HAB 2:4; ROM 1:17; ROM 5:1; GAL 2:16). Abraham is an example of saving faith. He believed in God’s promises, and exhibited this in a big way when he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to please God. This action was based on Abraham’s belief that God would make a great nation through Isaac; and Abraham never doubted it, though he was ready to take his son’s life if that is what God wanted. But of course, that is not what God wanted. God allowed this test of Abraham’s faith and his willingness to offer Isaac to be a foreshadowing of what God had planned from the very beginning of time. This same example is represented in the Passover lamb.

* GEN 17:19 ~ God told Abraham, “Your wife Sarah will surely bear a son and you will name him Isaac. And I will establish my everlasting covenant with him, and his descendants.”
* GEN 22:2–13 ~ God told Abraham to take His only legitimate son Isaac, and sacrifice him on a mountain. Abraham proceeded to do as God requested. Along the way, Isaac asked his father, “Where is the lamb for the sacrifice.” Abraham answered, “God will provide the lamb Himself.” Abraham was about to offer Isaac when an angel of God called from heaven. Abraham responded, “Here I am.” The angel replied, “Do not harm your son, for it is obvious that you fear and honor God since you were willing to sacrifice your only son as God asked.” Abraham found a ram caught in the bushes and offered it instead, as a sacrifice to God.
* EXO 12:3–13 ~ God renewed the covenant with Moses and the Israelites. The Israelites were commanded by God to sacrifice an unblemished male lamb and sprinkle the lamb’s blood on the door. This act of faith spared the first born of Israel from God’s curse on the Egyptians. The lamb’s blood signified that God would protect the homes of the righteous from the angel of death on this the first Passover.
* JOH 1:29 ~ John the Baptist saw Jesus coming when He said, “Look, here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”
* 1 CO 5:7 ~ Throw out the old leavened dough and become a new dough, without yeast; for that is what you have become because of the sacrifice of Christ who is the Passover Lamb.
* HEB 10:10–18 ~ Jesus’s sacrifice is the last sacrifice that will need to be made to atone for sin. Under the Old Covenant, sacrificial offerings were made as an atonement for sin. Under the New Covenant, we are made clean by the blood of Christ in one final sacrificial offering. This sacrifice will stand for all time, so sin offerings or sacrifices are no longer needed.

Jesus Christ is the image of God in human form. The sacrificial lamb symbolizes the blood offering for sin that is necessary for atonement. The same is exemplified in the Old Covenant of the Law and the New Covenant of Grace. Under the Mosaic law, sacrifices were made routinely, as an act of faith in God to forgive sins and to provide temporary atonement. In the New Testament, Christ provides forgiveness and atonement through the sacrifice of Himself for the sin of the world, providing a permanent atonement that would stand forever. Sacrifices made in accordance with the Old Testament of the Law represented Christ, the New Covenant.

* EXO 24:6–8 ~ Moses put half of the blood into bowls and sprinkled the other half on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read to the people, who responded, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded, and we will obey Him.” Then Moses took the rest of the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with these His words.”
* LEV 17:11 ~ The life of all flesh resides in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.
* MIC 6:6–7 ~ How am I to appear before God? Shall I come before Him with offerings and sacrifices? Will He be pleased with thousands and thousands of sacrifices? Shall I sacrifice my firstborn, the fruit of my body, to atone for the sin of my soul?
* MAT 26:26–28 ~ Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, and distributed it to the apostles saying, “Take this bread and eat it, for this is my body.” Then He took a cup of wine, thanked God, and passed the cup to the apostles saying, “Each of you drink from this cup of wine, for this is my blood of the New Covenant, shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.”
* 2 CO 5:17, 21 ~ If we believe in the atonement provided in the blood of Christ, we are saved from sin and death and we are transformed into a new creation.
* HEB 9:1–18 ~ The first covenant included rules concerning service to the Lord and the operation of a sanctuary for worship and prayer. This was a facility made by man. Part of the covenant provided for the offering of gifts and sacrifices. But such sacrifices were insufficient to make the offerer’s conscience perfect before God. This is why Christ the High Priest came. He was a divine and perfect sanctuary, not a sanctuary made by man but by the Holy Spirit. Christ obtained eternal redemption for us, not by the blood of sacrificial offerings but by His own blood. If the blood of sacrifices could sanctify and purify, in accordance with the Old Covenant, how much more the blood of Christ can purify and sanctify! Christ, who was without blemish offered Himself, to purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore, He is the mediator of the New Covenant; for by His death, the redemption and inheritance promised in the Old Covenant is realized. The Old Covenant also was dedicated with blood, for when Moses had finished reading from the Book of the Law, he took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the book, the altar, and the people saying, “This is the blood of the everlasting covenant which God has prescribed for all people.” Almost everything under the Law can be purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood there can be no remission. Christ must have suffered often since the beginning of time, but now He has abolished sin once and for all through His self-sacrifice. Just as it is necessary for all to die and then to be judged, so is it possible to be saved because Christ has taken our sins upon Himself. So, the Law, which pointed to the good things that were to come, could never with its continuous sacrifices make the offerer perfect before God; otherwise, the people would have been able to cease the offerings. The blood of such sacrifices could not cleanse the entire soul. God did away with the first covenant so He could establish the second, which provides for the sanctification of all people for all time, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. Christ offered one sacrifice for sins that would last forever, and now He sits at the right hand of God. Through that one offering, He has made eternally perfect those He has sanctified. The Holy Spirit has been a witness of this fact in both covenants. This is the meaning of the scripture, “This is the covenant I will make with my people after those days: I will put my laws in their hearts and write them in their minds, and I will remember their sins no longer.” Priests offered repeatedly the same sacrifices which alone could never take away sins. Therefore, God set aside the first covenant to establish the second, through which we are made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ. Never again will a sacrificial offering need to be made to atone for sin, for Christ paid the price of sin for all humankind that will last for all time.

Everyone who possesses the faith of Abraham will be saved. God revealed to Abraham the coming of Messiah, and Abraham believed (GEN 14:18–20; JOH 8:56–58; HEB 7:1–7). Throughout the Old Testament, there are references to God’s Messiah, which make it clear that God would be sending His Son Jesus Christ to make atonement. Therefore, God was essentially sending Himself in human form to make good on His promises. Christians know Christ to be that Messiah, who will return again to bring us home. Those who believe in Messiah possess the faith of Abraham. The seed of Abraham comprises all believers, who by faith are saved through the atonement of Christ the Messiah.

* GEN 15:5 ~ And God brought Abraham outside and said, “Look up to the heavens, and count the stars, if indeed you can. So will your offspring be.”
* GEN 22:18 ~ God told Abraham, “In your seed all the nations of the world will be blessed because you have been obedient to me.”
* GEN 26:24 ~ God appeared to Isaac and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid for I am with you and I will bless you. I will multiply your seed for the sake of your father Abraham.”
* ISA 41:8 ~ You Israel, are my servants, the children of Jacob whom I have chosen, and the seed of my friend Abraham.
* ROM 4:13, 16 ~ For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. Therefore, it is by grace through faith that the promise is given to all the seed; not only to those who obey the Law, but also to those who demonstrate the faith of Abraham who was the father of us all.
* ROM 9:4–8 ~ Who are the Israelites, to whom God gave the Law and granted the adoption, and with whom God made covenants and promises? Christ came for them and for all people. It is not as if God’s Word had no effect, for they who are of Israel are not all from Israel. Those who are of Abraham’s seed are not all his children. In other words, those who are children of the flesh are not children of God; those who cling to God’s promises, they are counted as children.
* GAL 3:6–29 ~ Abraham believed God and his faith was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then, that those who believe are the children of Abraham. The scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced it in the Gospel to Abraham as it is written: All nations of the world will be blessed through your seed. Anyone having faith is blessed along with Abraham, a man of great faith. No man is justified before God by the Law, because those who are righteous live by faith. To Abraham and his seed, the promises were made. God did not say “seeds” meaning many people, He said “seed” meaning one person, who is Christ the mediator between God and us. What then was the purpose of the Law? It was added due to sin, until the seed promised to Abraham had come. The Law was in effect until Christ came, so we could be justified by faith. In Christ we become children of God through faith. You are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for you have been baptized unto Him and have clothed yourselves in His righteousness. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in the Lord. If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to His promise.
* GAL 4:4–7 ~ When the time was right, God sent His Son, who was born of a woman under the Old Covenant of the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law. He did this so that everyone could receive the honor of becoming adopted children of God. If you are a child of God, you are no longer a servant, but a fellow heir of God through Christ.

The Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) cross-validate each other, making it clear that we need both testaments to see the elaborate plan of salvation God prepared before the creation of the world and humanity. There are hundreds of prophecies in the OT pointing to Messiah, which are fulfilled in the NT. Further, Christ and His followers who wrote the NT quoted the OT on hundreds of occasions. If you want to understand a particular concept, lesson, or prophecy, you need both testaments to fully understand it. Words of truth that are repeated in the OT continue to be repeated in the NT to ensure the reader grasps the significance. This is the hermeneutical rule called the progressive mention principle. We see this principle at work with the concepts of the Seed of Abraham and the Lamb of God. We see the comparative mention principle in the faith of Abraham who looked forward to the coming of Messiah, and our faith in Christ who is that Messiah, who came once and will come again for His people, alive or dead.

There is no book since the history of humankind that provides this degree of self-validation and internal consistency and reliability. Yes, the Holy Bible is deep, broad, complex, and mysterious, but it all fits together like a jigsaw puzzle. The more you study it, the greater will be your understanding, for the Word of God exhibits the wisdom of God which is available to everyone who wishes to expand their knowledge and envision the big picture. And though we receive tidbits at every reading, we will never grasp the entirety of it; well, not until God brings us home, then it will all make sense. In heaven, the learning and wisdom will be never ending as we continue to grow and learn exponentially under God’s divine guidance and love.

* PRO 8:1, 14, 22–23 ~ Wisdom and understanding are calling you. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I understand all things and I have great power. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, before the earth existed.
* ISA 48:16 ~ Come and listen. I (Christ) have not spoken in secret since the beginning. I was there all along; and now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent me.
* JOH 1:1 ~ In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
* ROM 16:25–26 ~ By the power of God you have received the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the revelation of His mystery which was kept secret since the world began. This mystery has now become a reality through Christ, according to the scriptures and the commandment of the everlasting God, and is sent to every nation for all to understand the obedience of faith.
* 2 CO 4:6 ~ God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, how extraordinary is your Word; it is a wellspring of wisdom that never stops. We thank you that you have revealed yourself to us since the beginning of time, so that all people could come to the knowledge of the truth, which sets us free from death and the curse of sin. Give us the faith of Abraham so we will never doubt, willing to sacrifice ourselves for the faith; prepare us to share that faith with anyone. Let us continue in our pursuit of understanding you, your works, and your words. For they convince us beyond a shadow of a doubt that you alone are God, along with your Holy Spirit, and Christ the Lord in whose name we pray, Amen.

By Andrew V. Barber (posted 04/01/2023)