



... heaven must receive [Jesus] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

## The Gospel Proclaimed to Abraham

By Edward Bender (SC)

**From the Editor:** *This article has been edited for length.*

The Bible is a series of connected spiritual commandments, instructions, and messages. There is a united theme from Genesis, consistently through the entire scriptures, consummating in Revelation. This united message has never changed. However, it has been embellished upon by the writers of the Bible.

The message and teaching that started in Genesis as the promise of land to the nation of Israel grew into the promises given to God's people everywhere, including you and me. The original promise was given to Abram and is proclaimed by Jehovah and His servants to be the Kingdom of God on earth. This proclamation is clearly defined in many places in the scriptures, including Genesis, the gospels, Galatians, 2 Peter 3:10-13, and Revelation, especially chapters 21-22.

The message Jehovah gave to Abram is the major foundational teaching of the entire Bible. It is founded on the faith of faithful Abram. We also know it as the Abrahamic Faith! The Bible has one united message from Genesis to Revelation and is entirely built upon God's gospel based on Genesis 12:1-3, 7, and Galatians 3:6-9.

1 *The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.... 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So, he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. (Genesis 12:1-3, 7)*

6 *Abraham 'believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' 7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations [people] will be blessed through you." [See Genesis 12:3.] 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:6-9)*

The teachings of the faith of Abraham continue in the Old Testament, as seen in Genesis 13.

14 *The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. 17 Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." (Genesis 13:14-17)*

22 *But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. 23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. 24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*

26 *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:22-29)*

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*Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:22-29)*

I will summarize portions of Genesis 15:1-21. God told Abram that He [Jehovah] was Abram's shield and great reward. Abram replied that he was childless. Jehovah made it clear that the child who would come from Abram and Sarai would be the promised heir. Jehovah promised Abram that his descendants would be as many as the stars of the sky. *"Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him [Abram] as righteousness"* (Gen. 15:6) [See also Romans 4:3]. Then Abram made an offering to Jehovah, and following that, Jehovah caused a deep sleep on Abram, and Jehovah promised him that *"for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. [see also Exodus 12:40]. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions (v. 13-14) .... On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates..." (v. 18).*

Further promises to Abram in the Old Testament include changing his name to 'Abraham'. We see that same message in the New Testament in Galatians. The gospel message is a consistent message of the Old and New Testaments.

*1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. 2 Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."*

*3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*

*9 Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you, for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 For the generations to come, every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. 13*

*Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." [Baptism is the seal of the New Covenant. See Romans 6:1-14].*

*15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai, your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."*

*17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"*

*19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.... 21 my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."* (Gen. 17:1-21)

Let us look at Genesis 22. God chose to prove Abraham, by taking Isaac to Moriah. He and Isaac went further and worshiped the LORD. Isaac said to his father, "I see the fire and the wood but where is the lamb?" Abraham bound his son Isaac and was ready to slay him, when the angel of the LORD interrupted Abraham and told him,

*"12 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said, 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.... 15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.' (Genesis 22:12-18)*

Things changed when there was a famine in the land at the time of Abraham. *"1 Now there was a famine in the land... 2 The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. 3 Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions."* (Genesis 26:1-5). We must also obey to receive the inheritance as well.

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For a more detailed picture of Abraham's life, please read the following texts: Exodus 2:24; 3:6, 15, 16; 33:11; Deuteronomy 30:20; Joshua 24:2, 3; Psalm 105:6-12, 42; Isaiah 41:8; Jeremiah 33:24; Micah 7:20 and John 8:39-58.

We can hardly complete the Old Testament teachings on the prophecies of Christ without making reference to Isaiah 53. This text predicts the story of the New Testament when the Son of God gave the ultimate sacrifice of HIS LIFE as a sin offering.

*"1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 He [Jesus] grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground [A creation of Jehovah God]. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. [His beauty was in his spiritual life and being] 3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. [All for us!] 4 Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our [yours and mine] transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; [for my/ your sins] the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. [He was obedient to God's will to die for our sins!] 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people, he was punished. 9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. [He was not guilty of any wrong doing, but was willing to die for you and me!] 10 Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, [for you and me] he will see his offspring and prolong his days, [he would be resurrected] and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. 11 After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied [he would be resurrected, Praise the LORD!!]; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many [including you and me], and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:1-12).*

In the New Testament, we see the prophecies of the Old Testament come alive and live among us as they were being fulfilled.

*"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers... 17 there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.*

*18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about... 20 an angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus." (Matthew 1:1-2, 17-18, 20-25)*

The renewed message was trumpeted throughout Israel, and it was first proclaimed by John the Baptist.

*1 John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!' (Matthew 3:1-2)*

Then Jesus' baptism: *13 Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*

*15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.*

*16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17)*

In Matthew 4, Jesus was tempted and found victorious by Jehovah, at which time Jesus began to preach.

*From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:17-19)*

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Then Jesus chose his twelve disciples. (See Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19 & Luke 6:12-19).

The scriptures repeat over and over again that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. They were not by themselves in this proclamation; other writers of the scriptures trumpeted that message as well.

*13 Jesus... asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

*17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.* (Matthew 16:13-20)

Remember the parable of the rich man & Lazarus, which is a parable and not a literal happening. Jesus was speaking of his own resurrection.

*29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "No, father Abraham," he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'* (Luke 16:29-31).

Of all of Christ's teachings, the summary of what really makes us his disciples is clearly defined in these few words.

*31 Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.* (John 8:31-32, 26)

It is on us to acknowledge the message that was there from the beginning and to accept this message in word and action. After all that we have mentioned so far, what should our response be to this message from Jehovah to His people, to you and me?

*38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."* (Acts 2:38-39). And Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

This was the message that Jesus, the Son of God, brought. It was time for all men everywhere to repent and be baptized and turn to the message of the Messiah!

*18 ... this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 22 For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'*

*24 "Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. 25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."* (Acts 3:18-26)

Additional information about Christ's life and ministry can be found in 1 Peter 1:18-25, where Jesus is called "a lamb without blemish or defect," and in Psalm 118:22-26, he is called "the stone the builders rejected." The New Testament, especially the book of Hebrews, proclaims this new message over and over again. Jehovah, the God of creation, loves mankind so much that He was willing to allow His only begotten son to die for all of sinful mankind! The book of Hebrews also ties the Old Testament prophecies in with the New Testament fulfillment of God sending His Son, Jesus Christ, as our offering for sins.

*"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world. 3 And he is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When he had made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, to the extent that he has inherited a more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say, "You are My Son, today I have fathered you"? And again, "I will be a Father to him and, he will be a Son to Me"? 6 And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." 7 And regarding the angels, He says, "He makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire." 8 But regarding the Son, He says, "Your throne, God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of his kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore God, Your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy above your companions."* (Hebrews 1:1-9)

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More on the interweaving of the Old Testament prophecies with the fulfillment of those same prophecies in the life of Jesus Christ.

*6 But one has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him? 7 You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands; 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet."*

*For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. 9 But we do see him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone.*

*14 Therefore, since the children [of God] share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 16 For assuredly he does not give help to angels, but he gives help to the descendants of Abraham. 17 Therefore, he had to be made like his brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since he himself was tempted in that which he has suffered, he is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:6-9, 13-18)*

We absolutely should never forget the foundational warning within the gospel message.

*1 Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do, if God permits. 4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame." (Hebrews 6:1-6)*

This warning is repeated multiple times in Hebrews 10:26 and 2 Peter 2:21. Another good text on this same subject is Matthew 12:31-32.

Chapters 8 and 9 of Hebrews compare the Old Covenant with the New Covenant to show how inconceivable the love of God really is, as demonstrated for us.

*6 But now he has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. 8 For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." ... 13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." (Hebrews 8:6-8, 13)*

In Hebrews 9, Paul compares the Old Covenant with the New Covenant.

*14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the violations that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:14-15)*

*20 ... "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." 21 And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. 22 And almost all things are cleansed with blood, according to the Law, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness... 23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these things, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made by hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 nor was it that he would offer himself often, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year by year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise, he would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages he has been revealed to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." (Hebrews 9:20-28)*

Jesus is coming again, maybe soon. Keep your eye on the nations gathering around Jerusalem. For more, see Ezekiel 37 and 38, and the battle of Armageddon. [See on my website: knowingthetruth.net] *"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful." (Revelation 17:14) See also 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.*

Yes, absolutely, Jesus is coming again, and maybe sooner than we anticipate. *"When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." (1 Peter 5:4)*

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*10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* (2 Peter 3:10-13)

We need to be sure we are living, walking, and abiding in the light of His Word.

*5... God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.... 7 if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.* (1 John 1:5, 7-8) See Proverbs 20:9 & Ecclesiastes 7:20. John says, "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

*18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.* (1 John 4:18-21).

Be on guard, test all teachings!

*1 Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.* (1 John 4:1-3)

Jesus is coming again, praise the Lord.

*15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.* (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18)

It is my conclusion that this is the completion of the Abrahamic promise.

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.* (Revelation 21:1-4)

*1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illuminate them; and they will reign forever and ever. 6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; ... 7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.* (Revelation 22:1-7)

The final warning issued is this.

*18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.* (Revelation 22:18-21)

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# True Abrahamic Faith

## By Jeffrey Fletcher

More often than not, truth is more amazing than fiction, especially when we're talking about human beings. Consider the following true stories:

I saw a story about a couple in California who, like many families today, got married for a second time, each having children from their previous marriages, à la the Brady Bunch. Between them, they had 10 children. However, they decided that they wanted to have one child together. So the woman began taking fertility drugs. She was able to conceive, and she gave birth to, not one, not two, not three, but four children. What's even more amazing? She is **fifty** years old.

A second story I heard from my mother-in-law, who lives in a retirement community in central Florida. It seems that one of her neighbors has been taking estrogen, which is a hormone given to post-menopausal women, and is, in fact, the most commonly prescribed medication in America today. But it can have some unusual side effects. In this instance, her neighbor has resumed her monthly cycle — a pretty remarkable thing when you consider that she is **seventy** years old.

And now for a really amazing story. This week, I read about a couple from the Middle East who were childless. They had been trying for years to have a child. They had tried everything, including adoption and even surrogacy, but still the woman was not completely fulfilled. She wanted to give birth to her very own baby. After years of trying, she had given up all hope of ever being able to conceive ... until one day, amazingly, she learned she was pregnant. It turns out that she carried the child to full term and was able to give birth to a healthy son - get this - when she was **NINETY** years old.

The most amazing thing about this story is not the birth of a child to a 90-year-old woman. Even more amazing than that is the fact that her husband, who was 100 years old, had never abandoned hope that she would give birth.

That man was Abraham.

As members of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, I think it is critical that from time to time we return to the story of Abraham and remind ourselves what the Abrahamic Faith is all about.

What is Abrahamic Faith? What does that mean? Sometimes, I'm afraid, we're tempted to think that Abrahamic Faith is simply a set of intellectual beliefs. In every issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD, we include a summary of doctrines which we advocate (see page 12).

These are all cognitive beliefs. They have to do with propositional truth. The only portion of that summary that says anything about what we are to do is the very last phrase - repent, get immersed, and then live a holy and pure life. These phrases form the basis of our creed, a summary of our beliefs. But is that what Abrahamic faith is - a set of intellectual propositions about the nature of God and man with a ritual and exhortation tacked on at the end?

If we say we have the faith of Abraham, shouldn't we understand what that really means? The fact of the matter is ... when we study the life of Abraham, we find very little spoken about what he actually believed in a structured, systematic way. Abraham left behind no creed or statement of belief about God. So to understand what faith meant to Abraham, we have to look at what he did by way of response to God.

First, we see in Genesis 12 that Abraham took his wife, his nephew, and his servants, left Haran, and went down to the land of Canaan, where he pitched his tent and built an altar to the LORD who had appeared to him. From this, we discover three things about the faith of Abraham:

**1. He had a personal relationship with God** - Abraham believed that God was a personal God.

Abraham was not an **atheist**, who doesn't believe in God.

He wasn't an **agnostic**, who won't say one way or another if there's a God.

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## True Abrahamic Faith (cont.)

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He wasn't a **deist**, who believes that God is a kind of higher power who simply wound up the universe at the beginning and then pretty much left us on our own to do as we please.

He wasn't an **animist**, who believes that an immaterial force called nature — Mother nature, Gaia, etc. — inhabits the universe and occupies all living things (had he believed that, he never would have killed an animal and offered up a sacrifice at the altar). If you want to know more about animism, just watch the Disney film Pocahontas, which reflects a prevalent 90s animistic belief that things like trees have spirits.

He was not a **pantheist**, who believes in and worships all gods. This popular belief holds that all religious truth is equally valid. All gods are equally valid and can justly be worshipped — whether they be called Buddha, Lord Krishna, or YHWH.

Abraham believed in God and God alone as the true God. Not a higher power, which is a kind of politically correct term for God among many 12-step groups. Yes, God is a higher power, but He is more than pure power, energy, or even impersonal spirit. God is a personal being with whom we can enter into a real, personal relationship.

We know these things about Abraham not because of what he said to others about God, but because of the way he responded to God.

**2. He made worship a priority** - notice that wherever Abraham settled, he built an altar. He came to Shechem; he built an altar to worship God. He went to Bethel; he built an altar to worship God. Later, he moved to Hebron; again he built an altar to God. Everywhere he settled, he built an altar to God. Worship was a priority to him. And remember too — this was not because of some religious law or empty ritual Abraham was following. The laws of Moses, which prescribed the type and frequency of offerings to God, were not given until over 400 years after the time of Abraham. Abraham selected animals from his flocks as a way of recognizing that everything he had was from God and really belonged to God. Abraham was willing to offer up his best as an act of worship to God.

This priority of worship was demonstrated when Abraham, after being victorious in battle against the confederacy of kings from Sodom and Gomorrah, as an act of worship, brought to Melchizedek, a priest of God, a tenth of the spoils of war. The very first tithe in the Bible does not come as a result of an ecclesiastical law, but as an offering of worship and display of faith on the part of Abraham. Abrahamic faith makes worship a priority and demonstrates it through sacrificial giving and tithing.

**3. He believed God** - he packed up his tents and moved based on a promise that God had given him. He believed God and demonstrated that belief by his actions. Had Abraham stayed in Haran, would he have had true faith? What if he had said to everyone in Haran, "Listen, I believe in God, I believe God keeps His promises, I believe that God will give me the land of Canaan and make a great nation out of me" and then never packed up his tents, never loaded up his camels and donkeys, never tightened his sandals, never pulled out his walking stick and never journeyed south to Canaan? Would that have been true faith?

You see, so much of what passes for "faith" these days isn't really faith at all. Part of the problem is that faith in the English language is a noun.

**Listen to the Dictionary**    **faith** (fēth) n.

1. Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or a thing.
2. Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence.
3. Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance.
4. The theological virtue is defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will.
5. The body of dogma of a religion.
6. A set of principles or beliefs.

A noun is a person, place, or thing, whereas a verb is an action. English is one of the only languages that has the word "faith" as a noun. In other languages, it is a verb. Why is that significant? Because Abrahamic Faith is a verb. Abrahamic Faith requires action. There's no room for couch potatoes in Abrahamic Faith. Abrahamic Faith is not a spectator sport.

One of the problems with American religion today is illustrated by the weekly football game, where we have 22 exhausted men who desperately need some rest being observed by thousands of spectators sitting around eating junk food and drinking beer, who desperately need some exercise.

Abraham set down his beer, put down the remote control, packed up his stuff, and began a journey that would last for the rest of his life. He didn't know how many stops, how many detours, how many frustrations, how many disappointments, how many battles, how much pain there would be on the journey. But then again, none of us on this journey of faith knows what we will encounter along the way. We travel out on faith, trusting that the God who has called us to the promised land will never abandon us on that journey, and that the land that awaits us is truly a good land.

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## True Abrahamic Faith (cont.)

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So, Abraham had a relationship with God, he made worship a priority, and he believed God, not as an intellectual pursuit, but as an active faith.

Do you want to have an Abrahamic Faith? I hope you do. I hope you are willing to make your faith more than just a spectator sport.

For those of you who just want your religion to be passive, I invite you to turn your brain off now, or better yet, quit reading. You won't be interested in what I have to say, anyway.

Now, for those of you who are still reading, congratulations! You want to have the faith of Abraham. Let me share with you three helpful hints that will strengthen your Abrahamic Faith. These come straight out of Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter four.

### 1. Abrahamic Faith is unwavering in its trust in God.

Paul wrote in verse 20, "No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God." Even though his wife had been barren for 90 years, he still believed. Now, Abraham wasn't naive. He knew that from a human perspective, what God had promised was impossible. But Abrahamic Faith isn't limited by seeing everything exclusively from a human perspective. Abrahamic Faith is able to see things from God's perspective. When all human hope is gone, Abrahamic Faith continues to be unwavering in its trust in God.

Jesus had Abrahamic Faith. It was Abrahamic Faith that enabled Him to go to the cross, to be crucified, to die a cruel death, in the unwavering hope that he would rise again, the unwavering hope that by making this supreme sacrifice, the sins of mankind would be atoned for.

Paul had Abrahamic Faith. It was Abrahamic Faith that motivated him to go to the cities of the Gentiles and preach the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was Abrahamic Faith that enabled him to suffer countless beatings, stonings, and other attempts on his life. Shipwrecks and imprisonments didn't cause his faith to waver. We need Abrahamic Faith to help us overcome the despair and loss of confidence that paralyzes most of us into apathy or inactivity.

You see, an ordinary person in 1860 might have said, "It's impossible to end slavery in America without completely destroying the unity of the United States of America."

And an ordinary person in 1960 might have said, "It's impossible to desegregate the South. It's foolish to even try."

And an ordinary person looking at Calcutta might have said, "There are just too many poor people here; what difference can one person possibly make?"

And an ordinary person looking at the problem of poverty in America in the 1990s might say, "There's nothing we can do about the living conditions of the working poor, so why bother?"

Someone with Abrahamic Faith sees things differently.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled President Abraham Lincoln to risk his popularity and personal safety in an effort to liberate those who were enslaved and to reunite our nation.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled Martin Luther King Jr. to give up his life in order to pave the way for greater equality for his fellow countrymen.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled Mother Theresa of Calcutta to devote her life to serving the poorest of the poor in India.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled multi-millionaire Millard Fuller to divest himself of his personal wealth and use it to help build adequate, affordable housing for hundreds of thousands of working poor through Habitat for Humanity.

Abrahamic Faith is strong because it doesn't limit itself to what human beings are able to do on their own - Abrahamic Faith listens to the Word of God and obeys. It doesn't rationalize, and it doesn't offer excuses for why it can't do what God has called it to do. Abrahamic Faith hears the voice of God and believes. It keeps on believing even when all hope seems gone.

Do you need some Abrahamic Faith in your life?

Perhaps your marriage could use a good dose of Abrahamic Faith. You say, "Everyone around me seems to be bailing out on their marriages, and when things get tough, it can be tempting to just give up," but Abrahamic Faith believes in God. God says, "Do not forsake the wife of your youth." God's word says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the church." Abrahamic Faith keeps on loving, even when from a human standpoint all reason to love is gone.

Maybe your parenting needs a dose of Abrahamic Faith. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." That's what God says. Abrahamic Faith believes that, even when you're wondering if it's worth all of the effort to bring your kids to church,

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## True Abrahamic Faith (cont.)

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teach them about God, and model a godly lifestyle. Even when it seems impossible to overcome the pressures of peers, violence, drugs, MTV, and promiscuity, Abrahamic Faith believes God and keeps doing what God says. Abrahamic Faith is unwavering in its faith in God.

### 2. Abrahamic Faith is strengthened by giving God glory.

"Abraham grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God." Does your faith need to grow stronger? What's the secret? Praise God, worship God, give Him glory. You see, there was something very important about all those altars Abraham built. They were built to the glory of God. The sacrifices offered were to the glory of God. When you come to a rough place in the road, and you feel your faith wavering, that's the time when you really need to build an altar to God. That's the time when you need to give Him glory. That's why we worship God regularly. We don't worship God only when it's convenient, only when there's nothing more important going on. The only reason anyone should miss corporate worship is illness.

If your job is more important than worshipping God, then you don't have Abrahamic Faith, and without worship, it won't get any stronger. If some hobby – be it golf, hunting, fishing, or sleeping late on Sunday – is more important than worshipping God, then you don't have Abrahamic Faith, and without worship, your faith won't get any stronger. If your family is more important than worshipping God, then you don't have Abrahamic Faith, and without worship, your faith won't get any stronger.

Do you want to have the Faith of Abraham, a strong faith that stands up to the tests and temptations, trials and struggles of life? Then you need to strengthen that faith by glorifying God in worship.

### 3. Abrahamic Faith is fully convinced that God is able to keep His promises.

Abrahamic Faith enabled Abraham to climb the mountain with his teenage son Isaac, raise the knife, and prepare to kill the child of promise - the same child through whom God promised to make him a great nation. The writer of Hebrews tells us that "Abraham reasoned that God was able to raise him from the dead." In other words, Abraham didn't believe it was his job to second-guess God's word. It is our job to obey and let God be God.

Abraham was unwavering in his trust in God. He was strengthened by giving God glory and was fully convinced that God was able to keep His promises. Abraham had Abrahamic Faith - not a set of creeds or propositional truths, but a life of faithful obedience to God's word.

What we in the Church of God Abrahamic Faith need is more people with Abrahamic Faith. We need people who have a personal relationship with God, who make the worship of God a priority, and who believe God even when He asks us to do the humanly impossible. Do YOU have the Faith of Abraham?

**About the Author:** Jeff Fletcher (1963-2025) graduated from Oregon Bible College and pastored in the Church of God for over 40 years. He served on the Board of Directors, as the editor of THE RESTITUTION HERALD, on staff at youth conferences, and was a regular writer for Church of God publications. He also served as the Pastors' Pastor for Church of God ministers for nearly a decade.

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## THEY STILL SPEAK

*By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead." Hebrews 11:4*

### What Is a Soul? Genesis 2:7

By John W. Burget (1915)

The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The Lord God did not put a soul within man, but after he made man, he caused the man to breathe the air or the breath of life, which caused the man to become a living soul or man. Would we not be dead souls or persons if we could not breathe the air or get our breath? Is it not false to say the soul is within us? God did not say he put a soul in man, but he said, and man became a living soul.

The sons of Joseph, who were born in Egypt, were two souls. Gen. 46:27. Were not those sons of Joseph human beings? They were called souls.

Therefore, I said unto the children of Israel, no soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. Lev. 17:12. If the soul is within the man how does that soul get the blood to eat? Do you not see the man himself is the soul, who can eat and is forbidden to eat blood? And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even, then shall he be clean. Lev. 17:15.

Take notice the soul can eat, the soul can wash its clothes, can bathe itself in water. Who can do those things but a human being who is called a soul?

In Num. 31:28, we read, and levy a tribute unto the Lord of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.

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Friends, if you investigate this scripture, you can see plainly that God said that persons and beeves and asses and sheep are souls, and the Lord's share is 32 persons, 72 beeves, 61 asses, 675 sheep, of all the different kinds of souls, the men of war captured by war.

See Josh. 11:11. And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there were not left any to breathe. God's word says the souls were smitten with the sword, utterly destroying them. Friends, which do you believe, God's word, or those people who say the soul never dies?

Again, God's word says there were not any souls left to breathe. Does not this prove man is the soul? Did not God give man lungs and cause him to breathe the air? Did not Joshua smite all the souls? There were not any left to breathe.

His breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Psa. 146:4. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. Prov. 19:15. The full soul loatheth an honeycomb, but to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet. Prov. 27:7. If a soul has eaten all he can eat, and an honeycomb was offered him, would not that soul say, No thank you, I cannot eat any more? Also that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth. Prov. 19:2.

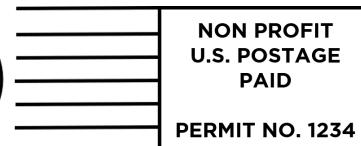
John the Revelator saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Rev. 20:4.

John says, "And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."

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- the oneness of God (1 Cor. 8:6)
- the Holy Spirit is God's power (Acts 1:8)
- Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son (Matt. 16:16) and is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)
- the Bible is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16)
- the mortality of man (Job 4:17; Psa. 146:4)
- the near return of Christ (Acts 1:11) and life only through him (Col. 3:3)
- the literal resurrection of the dead (John 5:28)
- the immortalization of those in Christ (1 Cor. 15:53-54)
- the destruction of the wicked (Rev. 21:8)
- the final restoration of Israel as the Kingdom of God under the kingship of Christ (Luke 1:32)
- the church to be joint heirs with him (Rom. 8:17)
- the "restitution [restoration] of all things" (Acts 3:21).

It also firmly advocates repentance and immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and a consecrated life as essential to salvation.