

United in their faith in the joyous resurrection promise they had received, Sarah had conceived and in due time given birth to a son whom they called Isaac. Note, Abraham's circumcision had symbolically cut off the very means for naturally producing a son. Did he realize at first that it would be by **resurrection faith** he would father a son by Sarah? There was a "resurrection" of their then dead bodies as far as reproduction goes. The picture was clear after the son was born. He called him Isaac ["laughter"]. Every time they called him, spoke of him, or even thought of him they would be reminded of the promise and faith that led to his birth. Join in their joy!

But there was to be more. Around fifteen years later Abraham's faith in resurrection would be sorely tried. And it would become a matter of life and death for Isaac. Would Abraham's faith hold firm? Would Isaac's loving, confident submission to his father's will remain fast? (Isaac was probably a teen and able to give his aging Father a real tussle if he wanted to escape death.) Would Abraham actually slay Isaac his son who he loved dearly? Slay him who was the answer to the faith he held to for over twenty five years? Put him through the terror and pain of death, though sudden and quick? Would God come through and actually raise Isaac from the dead? How could Abraham believe He would? This belief was based upon one very definite final promise given by God shortly before Isaac was conceived, "**Because in Isaac shall thy seed be called.**"

(The total significance of God's statement is lost in the translation in most versions. But God made sure the real message of this text is unfolded to all. Two thousand years later Paul pointed to this passage when reasoning with the Gentile Galatian saints, resting his argument on the fact that the word "seed" is in the Hebrew singular tense. It referred to Christ. That promise would have been of huge importance to one walking in fellowship with God by faith—his mind seeking out God's mind and purposes. Abraham had been promised early on that in him would all the nations of the earth be blessed. This "**Seed,**" **descended from Isaac**, would be the means of fulfillment of that early basic promise of universal blessing. Yes, Abraham would have a multitude of descendants through numerous progeny. But only **one** Man from one line, Isaac's, would fulfill the promise. That Man of course was to be the Lord Jesus Christ. The One, born of a virgin, descended from Isaac through Judah and David. See Luke 3 for the genealogy.)

Abraham had been stopped by the voice from heaven of the Angel of Jehovah when about to slay his son. He had believed from the direct specific promise regarding Isaac's future that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

*Hebrews 11 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said,*

*That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

God, in response to Abraham's great faith, filled out the promise in greater detail in both its scope and the blessings expected.

**"By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."**

Clearly this pronouncement was triggered by Abraham's sacrifice of his beloved only son. God was so intent upon this blessing that He even added an oath to His own irrevocable word. An oath in His Own immutable Name. It is spoken of in Hebrews.

*Hebrews 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, 14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

Earlier promises had named the dust of the earth, the stars of heaven. But here God specifically included the sand upon the sea shore with the stars of the heaven (not mentioning the dust of the earth). The stars speak of a huge company of specifically discernable individual light bearers. The sand of the sea shore speaks of a vast company of unorganized individuals on the shores of the seas marking its assigned borders, resisting incursion of its restless waters upon the land.

*Isaiah 57:20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

#### The Stars:

The heavenly saints from Old and New Testaments.

1. All those of faith in the Old Testament who died before the Church was formed, risen bodily from the grave and changed at the rapture.
2. All believers in the Church--taken up alive or risen bodily from the grave and changed at the rapture.
3. All of the martyrs for Christ's name during the seven years Tribulation.

These will populate the New Heaven for eternity.

#### The Sand along the Sea Shore.

1. These will be earthly saints, those emerging from the Great Tribulation.

2. These will be Earthly saints, emerging from the Millennial reign of Christ.

These will populate the New Earth for eternity.

The rest of the blessing promised defeat of His enemies and world wide dominion over them. But this dominion would be for blessing—peace and prosperity.

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**Take now thy son, thine only [son] Isaac, whom thou lovest, ... and offer him ... for a burnt offering**

Significantly, this is the first instance of love mentioned in the Bible. It speaks of the love of God the Father for His only begotten (one and only) Son. The Father's love for the Son is the highest example of love given us by God, for it is eternal—from before the creation. While we tend to place romantic love between a man and a woman, and parental love for their children, as the highest types of love, they are second in God's order. The second instance of love in the scriptures is played out in the romantic love story of Isaac and His Bride Rebecca in chapter 24.

Hadn't God condemned the Canaanites to destruction for their wickedness? Wasn't their wickedness characterized by child sacrifice? Certainly sacrifice of one's child to a demon idol was horrible for any parent. How was God's

command to sacrifice Isaac different? Because it was accompanied by the assurance of resurrection! It portrayed the most momentous example of God's love in history.

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

*Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,...*

Though Abraham and Isaac were spared from an actual sacrifice, they went through the agony of anticipation. But the ram caught in thicket was not spared. He too speaks of Christ. Christ the Substitute. He would willingly die for our sins on the cross. He was "caught" in the thicket of His infinite love for His Father and His love for us as lost sinners without hope. Glory, praise and worship to the Father and the Son. As Abraham and Isaac had, They "went both of them together" to the Cross. There for three long hours God abandoned the Lord Jesus while He judged Him for our sins. Sins He bore in His own body on the cross. Have you trusted in Him as Abraham did? Are you walking with God as Abraham did? Has He tried you in some excruciating way as He did Abraham?

By Ronald Canner, August 11, 2010