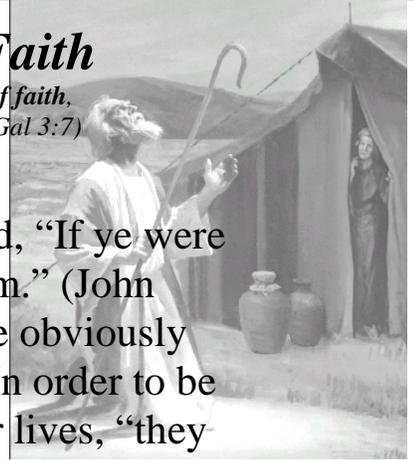




Abraham, Father of Faith

"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal 3:7)



Are you a child of faith like father Abraham? Jesus said, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." (John 8:39). The Children of Israel were confused; they were obviously his physical seed, but they were not children of faith. In order to be children **of faith**, faith must continually function in our lives, "they which are *of faith* are the children of Abraham!" Are you "of the faith;" or are you operating in faith? There is a difference!

How does faith operate in the lives of Christians? We who are of faith receive a word from God! Through faith, we continue in that word and over time, that word (*seed*) produces a harvest and that harvest becomes our inheritance. How do we obtain to that inheritance? The answer is simple, "We must continue in faith after we receive a word from God."

But what happens after we receive a word from God? We all have read the passage, "then cometh the devil, and ***taketh away the word out of their hearts.***" The devil always contends against the word that we receive from God, therefore he instigates problems, "when tribulation or persecution ariseth ***because of the word***, by and by he is offended" (Matt 13:21). The Apostle Paul was stoned until they supposed he was dead. Nevertheless, Paul rose up and continued, "exhorting them to ***continue in the faith***, and that ***we must through much tribulation enter*** into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21).

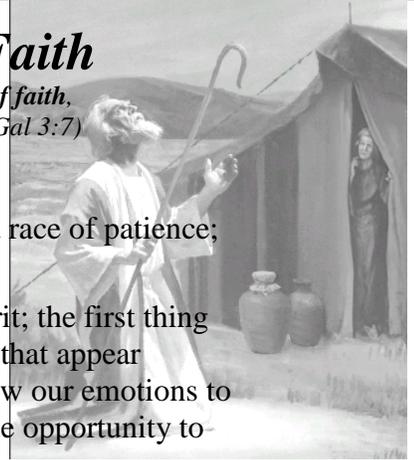
This is a process that continues during the life of each Christian who operates in faith. Christians receive a word; the devil attacks the word and through faith the Christian continues in the word until he receives the expected manifestation! In the natural world, the period of time between germination and manifestation is known as gestation. During the gestation period we must be patient and wait for the harvest. In the spirit realm, germination takes place in our spirit and manifestation takes place in our body so during the gestation period the word must be working in our soul (*mind, will, and emotions*), "In your ***patience*** possess ye your *souls*" (Luke 21:19)! Next, we are going to observe how patience works closely with faith.

Obviously, it would be important for us look to, "***the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all***" (Rom 4:16). The Bible teaches that we would be wise to learn lessons and become, "followers of them who ***through faith and patience*** inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). That passage teaches that they gained victory through "**faith and patience!**" If we are going to be successful in our walk of faith "let us run with ***patience*** the race that is set



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before us" (Heb 12:1). Most of us have realized that our race of faith is a race of patience; as opposed to running a short sprint, we are involved in a log marathon!

When we get a word from God and begin to observe that word in our spirit; the first thing that happens is that we run into circumstances and challenging situations that appear completely contrary to what the word from God has promised. If we allow our emotions to take over and we stop focusing upon the word of God, we will have ample opportunity to shrink back from faith and simply give up.

However, we can strengthen our beliefs by looking to the life of father Abraham. Obviously, Abraham's name was changed from Abram his birth name. However, his name change while significant, will not figure into this Bible Study. Therefore, we will regularly refer to him as Abraham. He is a perfect example for those of us who are living this life by faith! We can observe at least seven specific conditions in Abraham's life between the germination of the word and the manifestation of his harvest. It is also instructive for us to observe how Abraham reacted to God's word after he received his promised manifestation.

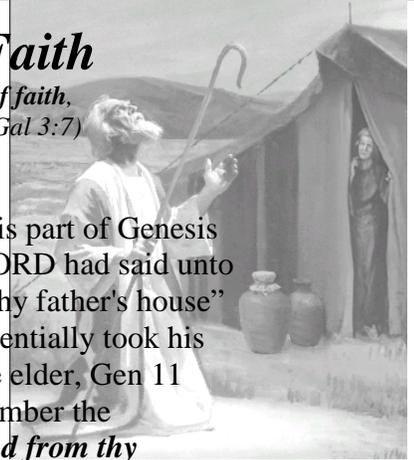
God gave Abraham a word, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will **ble**ss thee, (*The word "ble*ss" which is used here comes from the root meaning to "bend the knee." Culturally, this takes us to the event when a patriarch about to die; at that time he would bestow his possessions upon the one kneeling (*the ble*ssed) before him. This one is to receive a double portion (usually, the firstborn.) This one would become doubly blessed over all of his other brothers. To be "blessed" is to receive "worth," "value," and "well being!") and make thy name great; (*God makes somebodies out of nobodies.*) and thou shalt be a **ble**ssing: (*Here we find that Abraham himself was commanded to pass on his own ble*ssing to others.) 3 And I will **ble**ss them that **ble**ss thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be **ble**ssed" (Gen 12:1-3). After Abraham received that word and make no mistake, this was a great word from God, he immediately acted upon it, "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran" (Gen 12:4). Now realize, when Abraham embarked upon this "walk of faith," he had no idea where he was going. He had to trust God every step of the journey. Let's take note of those specific conditions that came about during the gestation period of the word that he had received from God:

- A. (**False Start**) When he was 75 years old he departed Haran, "5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered" (Gen 12:5). Abraham was told to leave, "**from thy kindred and from thy father's house.**" Nevertheless, even though Abraham left he did not completely obey, "And Terah (*to breathe*) took Abram his son, and Lot (*a veil*) the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the



Abraham, Father of Faith

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Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan" (Gen 11:31). Note that this is part of Genesis Chapter 11 and therefore comes in chronological order before "the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house" (Gen 12:1). This means that when God spoke to Abraham that he essentially took his father and Lot with him! Since Terah was still alive and therefore the elder, Gen 11 refers to him as the individual who left for the land of Canaan. Remember the command from God was for Abraham to leave, "**from thy kindred and from thy father's house.**" Why was it so important for Abraham to leave his father's house and form his kindred? When anybody steps out on faith, they must abandon all that they have learned in this life. All of those activities, associations, philosophies, and traditions only serve to weaken their walk of faith!

B. (**Famine**) Now, notice the next thing after his false start after he acted upon God's word to leave, "And **there was a famine in the land:** and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; **for the famine was grievous in the land**" (Gen 12:10). Abraham might well have thought, "Why did God bring me into a place where I would encounter famine? This doesn't seem like much of a blessing." Abraham dwelt in tents; this means that he was a sojourner as he traveled the land from north to south. In essence, like a light in darkness, he was a preacher (*witness; God always sends a witness before He sends destruction*) to the Canaanites among whom he sojourned.

C. (**Strife**) Abraham's problems did not end after he experienced the famine, notice what happened when he and his nephew Lot went out of the land of Egypt, "And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. **6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was a strife** between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle" (Gen 13:5-7). So, after Abraham received a word from God, he had to deal with his false start, a famine, and even strife in his family!



D. (**Seeming Victory**) Abraham experienced a small amount of victory in resolving the strife, however, even then he seemed to get the short end of the stick, "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before thee? **separate thyself, I pray thee,** from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen 13:8-9). Of course we know that Lot took the choicest and well watered land that was in the plain



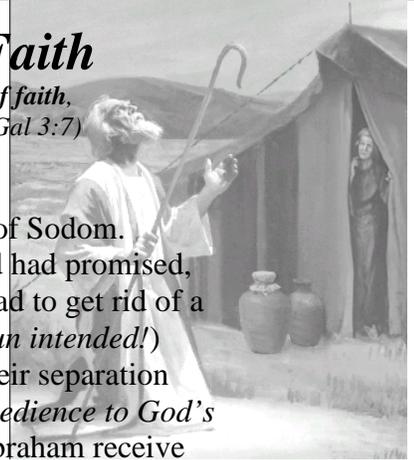
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of the Jordan river and Lot settled in the area around the ancient city of Sodom. Essentially, in order for Abraham to receive the full blessing that God had promised, (*Do not forget that God had told Abraham to leave his kindred.*) he had to get rid of a



Lot (*every pun intended!*) Only after their separation (*complete obedience to God's word*) did Abraham receive most of the blessings that God had promised to him.



worse; notice what happened next, "And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; 2 That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar" (Gen 14:1-2). During this war, "they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. 12 And **they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom**, and his goods, and departed. 13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew" (Gen 14:11-13). After Abraham had separated himself from Lot, he had to take his army and defend Lot's household.

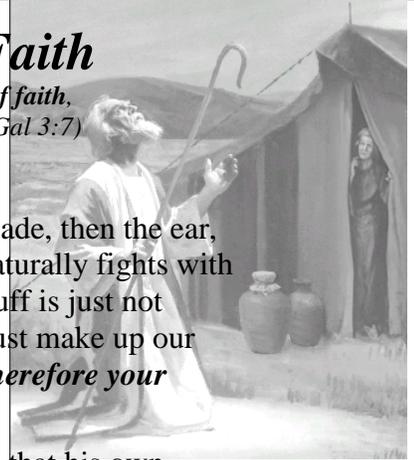
E. (**Warfare**) Even after eliminating strife (*Lot*), Abraham's problems did not end after he resolved that negative situation! If anything his problems got progressively

F. (**Frustration**) We would naturally expect that surely, after winning a major battle against the five kings Abraham's life would at long last turn around. However, instead of success, Abraham's soul began to experience frustration; notice what the word records. Abraham said, "**Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?** 3 And Abram said, **Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir**" (Gen 15:2-3). Instead of receiving the promise of becoming the father of many nations, Abraham did not even have one heir! God consoled Abraham and gave him another word, "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Even though Abraham experienced frustration, he believed God. Remember, "In your **patience** possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19)! Abraham had to win this battle against his own soul. The scripture teaches, "For **ye have need of patience**, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb 10:36). Here again, we find patience closely associated with faith. This is what takes place during the gestation period between the word and the manifestation. We know how harvest works in the



Abraham, Father of Faith

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natural world, "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). However, our mind naturally fights with ourselves during the course of our trials; the mind says, "This faith stuff is just not working I am going to quit and do something else!" However, we must make up our minds now that we are going to do the will of God, "**Cast not away therefore your confidence**, which hath great recompence of reward" (Heb 10:35).

- G. (**Flesh**) Abraham's problems were not quite over; he still had to learn that his own human efforts in the flesh would produce no fruit! Even the fruit that seemed to be promising (*Ishmael*) was not of God, "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2 And **Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her.** And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes" (Gen 16:1-4). Abraham had faced a false start, famine, strife, seeming victory, warfare and frustration. Now he was faced with his own works of the flesh! These same seven conditions are likely to be expressed in our lives too during our own walk of faith!

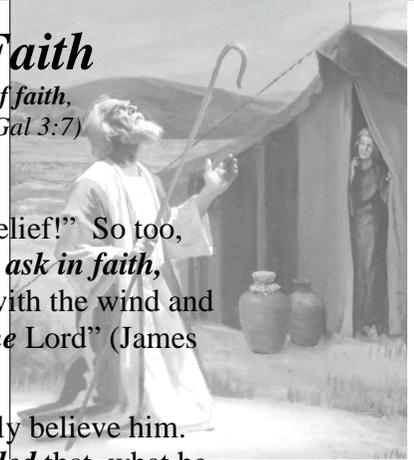
As we have observed, Abraham faced many challenges and trials. Things progressively went from bad to worse; however, when his frustration finally set in, God changed his inner picture, "he brought him forth abroad, and said, **Look now toward heaven**, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be**" (Gen 15:5). God is faithful as He continues to strengthen us with an added word. When God spoke this word, Abraham believed God, "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; **according to that which was spoken**, So shall thy seed be. 19 **And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead**, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 **He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief**; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being **fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform**. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Rom 4:18-22). Abraham was righteous in the sight of God because he believed God! When we are faced with challenges we too receive a more progressive word from the Lord. God encourages us as our ultimate destiny comes more clearly into focus during our walk of faith.

We just read that Abraham did not give consideration to the problem set before him. Through 70+ years of marriage he and Sarah never did have a child. Abraham had the opportunity to look at that glaring condition of their unfruitful bodies or he had the opportunity to look through the eyes of faith at God's promise. He was destined to receive whichever state of affairs that he decided to consider, "**And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead.**" Abraham looked beyond his problem! The



Abraham, Father of Faith

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Scripture says that, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief!" So too, whatever we consider in faith is what we will receive from God, "**let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.** For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For **let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord**" (James 1:6-7).

God takes "nobodies" and turns them into "somebodies" when they simply believe him. Abraham was strong in faith and he believed God; he was, "**fully persuaded** that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Abraham's tribulation and frustration literally turned into laughter! Abraham's child was named Isaac (*laughter*)! God always gets the last laugh, "**He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:** the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps 2:4). Our question should be, "How great is our God?"

As long as we do not believe God for anything we are no threat to the devil! However, once we engage in the spiritual enterprise of belief, the devil is sure to attack us because we are challenging his area of dominion. Once we begin to believe God's word, we certainly have become a threat to his rule. We should learn to recognize that our trials will usually come in the exact area of our belief.

It is not just Abraham; all of these same conditions will manifest in the life of any person of faith! We are among, "them who **through faith and patience** inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). We can view Abraham's experience as a personal blueprint for any who will embark upon their own walk of faith with God!

Abraham's trials did not end after he received Isaac (*his harvest*); if anything, all of Abraham's previous trials only made him ready for his next trial! The next question from the person of faith should be, "What am I going to do after I receive my harvest?"

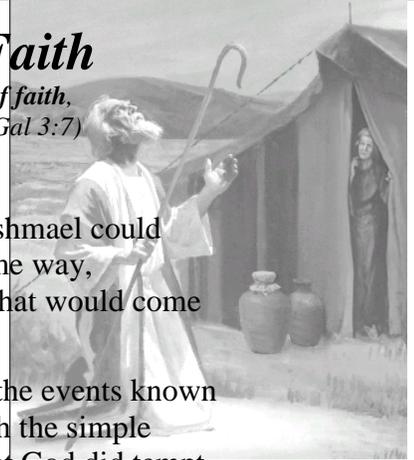
Let's notice in Abraham's life, "Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age. 8 And **the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.** 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, **Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son,** even with Isaac" (Gen 21:7-10).

What are we going to do with what God has given to us? Notice what Abraham did after Isaac's birth. After the believer receives the promise from God, more trials arise. Abraham had to let go of what he had accomplished in the flesh. God told Abraham, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen 21:12). Ishmael was never God's plan. In the same way, something that we are holding close to our hearts may need to be discarded at some time during our future wall of faith.



Abraham, Father of Faith

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Abraham had to decide to let go of Ishmael; he loved him nevertheless, Ishmael could never fulfill the blessings that God had intended for Abraham! In the same way, Abraham's efforts in the flesh could never be compared to the blessings that would come through the son of promise!

Now we come to Abraham's most severe test of all! Chapter 22 records the events known to the Hebrews as the *Akidah*. The essence of this test is captured through the simple words recorded in verses 1-2, "And it came to pass **after these things**, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. 2 And he said, Take now thy son, **thine only son Isaac**, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen 22:1-2).

The first thing that we need to recognize from this event is God asking Abraham if he was available, "and **said unto him, Abraham**: and he said, Behold, here I am." God's first question of those that really believe Him is, "Are you available?" Abraham answered immediately. We too should be instant in our response to God's call.

Next, we find God asking of a mere man the ultimate sacrifice! Abraham is commanded to offer his beloved son in sacrifice. The story continues with Abraham's reaction, "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4 Then **on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes**, and **saw the place afar off**." (Abraham looked into the spirit realm and saw the crucifixion where Jesus became the substitute sacrifice! We should also realize that as soon as God spoke to Abraham, Isaac was dead to Him! This means that Abraham waited **three days** before Isaac came back to life in his heart!)



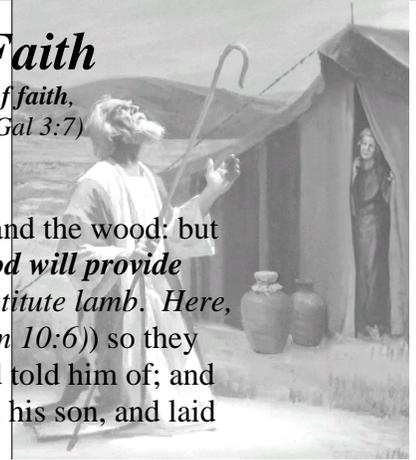
Continuing with verse 5 "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and **I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you**, (Here we find Abraham speaking his faith! He really believed that God would keep his promise and even resurrect Isaac if necessary, "Abraham, 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" (Heb 11:17-19) 6 And Abraham took the wood

of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. (They were together, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)) 7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said,



Abraham, Father of Faith

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My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but **where is the lamb** for a burnt offering? 8 And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a lamb** for a burnt offering: (*God provided himself to be the substitute lamb. Here, a second time we find Abraham speaking his faith! "faith speaketh" (Rom 10:6)*) so they went both of them together. 9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.



12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. 13 And **Abraham lifted up his eyes**, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and **took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son**. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, **In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen**" (Gen 22:3-14).

Let's focus for a moment on some of the details at the end of the narrative. Abraham **understood that the ram**



caught in the bushes was a substitute! We read, "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said . . .

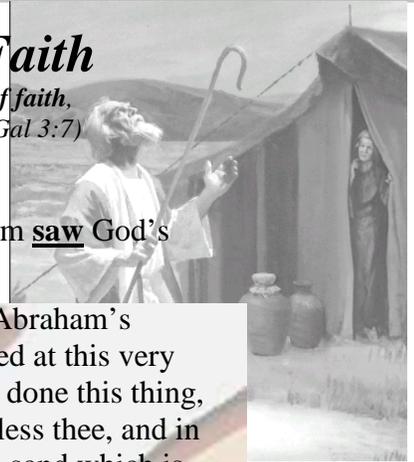
Behold the fire and the wood: but **where is the lamb** for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a LAMB** for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together" (Gen 22:7-8). Of course Abraham knew the difference between a RAM and a LAMB! Because there was a change of animals, he understood that God had **provided a substitute** for Isaac.

Mt. Moriah (*The place where Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac*) is about ¼ mile from Calvary. Abraham saw a vision, "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**" (Heb 11:17-19). "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place **Jehovah-jireh**: (*The Lord will provide*) as it is said to this



Abraham, Father of Faith

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day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen" (Gen 22:13-14). Abraham **saw** God's provision.

Tonight, you are learning about faith; this means that you too are one of Abraham's children. This means that God's promise to Abraham is still being fulfilled at this very moment, "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" (Gen 22:16-18).

We live in the end times; it is no coincidence that the Almighty called us (*like Abraham*) to be friends of God and walk with Him at this critical juncture in human history! The battle of the last days is perhaps the most significant. We have said that we are in a race of faith; one of the aspects of a relay race is that a coach reserves his fastest and most productive



runners for the first and the last legs of the race! Abraham was the first leg of the race and we are the last! Now that the baton of faith has been passed to us, "***let us run with patience*** the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1)!