

What's in a word? - The Faith of Jesus':

Turn to Genesis 22:12

And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me."

I would like to revisit the story of Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Firstly, while many translations may use the word 'boy' or 'lad' to describe Isaac, the Bible does not appear to tell us how old he was at the time. The Hebrew word *na'ar* (5288) can mean a boy but also a youth or young man. Some argue he was probably 25-30. Many Rabbinic sources argue for 37 based on their contention that his mother, Sarah died immediately after this event (she was 127 and gave birth to Isaac at 90).

Certainly, it seems a fair assumption that he was at least a teenager. Thus, he was old enough to question his father and to demonstrate his own strength of faith in submitting to be bound and placed on the altar.

This story is an incredible parallel to Jesus' sacrifice.

In Abraham's story we have a Father and a Son – Abraham & Isaac.	In Jesus' story we have a Father (God Almighty) and a Son (Jesus).
"Take your son, your <i>only son</i> , Isaac" (Gen 22:2);	"For God so loved the world that He gave <i>His one and only Son</i> . . ." <i>Jn 3:16</i>
"Go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there. . ." (Gen 22:2)	it is believed that this area is where the city of Jerusalem was built many years later, where Jesus was crucified outside its city walls (Hebrews 13:12).
"Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering" (Gen 22.2)	"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3)
"Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac" (Gen 22:6)	Jesus, "Carrying His own cross. . ." (John 19:17).
"but where is the <i>lamb</i> for the burnt offering?" (Gen 22:7)	John said, "Look, the <i>Lamb of God</i> , who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

<p>· Isaac, the son, acted in <i>obedience</i> to his father in becoming the sacrifice (Gen 22:9)</p>	<p>Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. <i>Yet not as I will, but as you will</i>" (Matthew 26:39)</p>
<p><u>Resurrection – Isaac figuratively</u> "By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice His one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking he did receive Isaac back from death" (Hebrews 11:17-19)</p>	<p><u>Resurrection - Jesus in reality</u> Jesus, "that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4)</p>

Abraham, had such faith in God that he believed that when he sacrificed his 'only' Son (only, in the sense that he was the son of a promise, unlike Ishmael who was the son of the worldly approach – the son of a Bondswoman' or slave – the son of a lack of faith.) Isaac was the son of a promise by God; just as Jesus was the Son of a repeated promise starting in Gen 3:15, in Deut 18:18, etc. We may be called 'son's of God or 'adopted sons/daughters' and 'brothers/sisters' of Jesus, but only Jesus was conceived in a virgin by the power of God, and thus was declared 'the Son of God' by the angel Gabriel. (Luke 1:35)

It was also through Isaac that God had promised Abraham all the land he could see from the Mountains of Israel.

The Lord said, "Arise, walk in the Land ...for I give it to you." (Genesis 13:17)

The boundaries of the Land promised to Abraham include all of modern day Israel, the disputed territories and much more. This promise was unconditional.

In Abraham's time a contract or covenant was agreed to, not by a handshake or signature, but by the sacrifice of animals. These animals were cut in two and the two halves separated on the ground – both parties to the contract would then walk between the two parts of the animal or animals, signifying their agreement and that if they broke the agreement they would be liable to the same fate as the sacrificed animals. In Gen 15:9 we see Abraham take a heifer, goat, ram, turtle dove and pigeon. The heifer, ram, & goat are cut in two –but only 'God'- actually a representation of God - passes between them, not Abram – therefore only God guarantees covenant – Abram/Abraham can not affect this permanent promise.

"...the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying ...'To your descendants I have given this Land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates ", (Genesis 15:18)

Abraham had seven sons in addition to Isaac (Genesis 16:15; 25:1-2), but the covenant was established with Isaac. Before the birth of Isaac, Abraham asked the Lord to give the promise to Ishmael, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" (Genesis 17:18)

The Lord had other plans. He said to Abraham, "...No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him." (Genesis 17:19) (show map?)

This promise was expanded through the Messiah to include the whole earth – see for example Dan 7 and Zech 9:10.

All this through Isaac, not Ishmael and yet here Abraham was being asked to kill Isaac before he was even married and had conceived any children!

Just as Abraham, the 'Father of the faith' had great faith in God, Isaac also had great faith in His Father – as a teenager or grown man, he allowed his

father to tie him up and place him on the altar. Equally, Jesus also had great faith in His Father, when he willingly allowed himself to be taken to his sacrificial altar. Jesus like Abraham and Isaac, was greatly tested – he sweated so much that it was like drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane Luke 22:44). Jesus prayed that 'if it were possible' he could be spared the coming crucifixion, but yet accepted with great faith, God's way – he said 'not what I will, but what you will'. Just as he had taught the disciples in the so called Lord's Prayer 'Thy will be done'.

Consider the parallel – Abram & Isaac /God the Father & Jesus.

Jesus' faith was in God the Father as was Abraham's. This is perhaps why we read predominately of the 'faith of Abraham' rather than 'the faith of Isaac'.

So we see in Gen 22:12 a foretaste of the sacrifice of Jesus. While, Abraham was stopped from going through with the sacrifice of his 'only Son', God had seen the faith that Abraham and Isaac had. Paul tells us that Abraham's great faith was credited to him as righteousness. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham had such trust in God that he expected God to resurrect his son Isaac if he did sacrifice him. (Hebrews 11:17-19)

The Gospel or 'Good News' that Christians are to believe is the virtually the same Good News Abraham believed. It is "the Good News of the Kingdom" that Jesus himself believed in. It is Jesus mission statement (Luke 4:43). His purpose – what the main reason for his ministry was.

Take our your translation and read Romans 3:26. You will probably read in Romans 3:26 that God will justify the believer "who has faith in Jesus".

However, this phrase literally rendered is that God will justify the one **"who is of the faith of Jesus."**

This phrase is found in the next chapter where Paul speaks of "the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16). It is the same Greek construction. (*Rom 4:16 ek pistis abraam* (direct translation = of faith Abraam) compared to *Roms 3:26 ek pisteos Iesous – i.e. Jesus*) (direct translation = **out** of faith **of** Jesus.)

There is no reason, other than the theological bias of the translators, to translate one instance as "the faith of Abraham" and the other as "faith in Jesus." Jesus had Abraham's faith, that is, faith in the same promises of God.

Both Darby's and Young's Literal translations use 'faith of Jesus'.

This phrase, "the faith of Jesus," is often obscured in our English Bibles, even though this is how the Greek text states it. Romans 3:22 is normally translated: "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ [is] for all those who believe." It is more accurately translated: "the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ" (which is how **only** the KJV translates it – *all other translations use 'faith in...', which changes the theological angle considerably since it negates any input by the followers of Jesus*).

*KJV: Rom 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is **by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference*

Thus, we are to have the faith of Jesus, the faith he lived by. There can be no faith in (or better: **trust in**) Jesus if we do not have the faith of Jesus, the faith he lived by, the faith he modeled, the faith he taught. 'Faith in Jesus' is not diminished by this understanding but it helps us focus on the Message of the Messiah.

The practical implication is significant. What is the faith that brings righteousness before God the Father?

It is the faith of Messiah Jesus. What faith was this? Faith in his Father's promise given to Abraham, that God would raise the righteous dead and bring them into a Kingdom of glory through His Anointed King. See Matthew 25:31, where the faithful are invited to enter or inherit the Kingdom "when the Son of Man comes in His Glory and sits on His glorious throne".

That is, faith in the promised eschatological Kingdom. That is the coming physical Kingdom of God, not the present spiritual manifestation of this Kingdom in the hearts of believers, but a real time in the future after the return of Christ Jesus.

Who will live in the Coming Age with Jesus?

His brothers and sisters. Who are his brothers and sisters?

Jesus answered this in Luke 8:21 "... my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it". (Also Matt 12:50 "**For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.**" & Mark 3:35).

That is, those who have the faith of Jesus.

This is the "faith of Jesus." What is the steadfastness of the true believer, but to "keep the commandments" of God and to keep "the faith of Jesus".

NKJV: Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

There is no way to have **trust in** Jesus except to believe what Jesus believed, that is, to have the faith **of** Jesus.

To believe in Jesus is to believe his word or Gospel announcement.

Thus the only way to express the true faith of Jesus the Christ is to live according to the faith he walked by and was motivated by. Jesus' faith in God's word of promise becomes our faith in the same Gospel promise. The only way to be righteous before the Father is to trust His Son, i.e. to believe the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God he believed in, and to believe that Christ Jesus atoned for our sin so that we are not prevented by our sin from entering the Coming Age. This is to believe in Jesus. This is to be of Abraham's faith, to be a true son/daughter of God.

Let us hold fast to the faith of Jesus – let us trust Jesus - let us cling to the solid expectation of the future Coming Age – the time when death will be conquered, when sin will be removed, when tears of suffering will be no more, when God's justice will be done and we will walk on a renewed, redeemed, restored Earth with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Paul Herring June 2006 [*I am once again indebted to Frank Selch, Greg Deuble & Anthony Buzzard for the ideas presented here.*]

Aside:

It is interesting to reflect on some Rabbinical and Jewish commentaries on the event of the offer of Issac. In the quote/example below, you will see that the Jewish writer is confused as to why the Matriarch Sarah's death is not given greater preference over both the binding of Issac and the buying of the plot of land.

"So central and powerful is the akeidah experience in the Jewish religious and national conscience that the attempted sacrifice is recalled in many a prayer. The incident has been turned to by grieving parents throughout the Jewish Nation's trials. References can be found to the ashes of the sacrificed Isaac in the High Holiday liturgy, as well as in the Talmud. What ashes? Abraham offered no more than his willingness to offer his son, and a God-given ram! Hardly a great sacrifice, and far less than the realities that have befallen the Jewish people countless times since. On the other hand, Sarah the Matriarch's real death appears to fade into insignificance amid haggling over the field of Machpelah.

By Schulamith C. Halevy <http://www.cs.tau.ac.il/~nachumd/sch/sch/PAPERS/Sarah.txt>

As already discussed, thanks to the arrival of the Messiah and the NT scriptures we now understand the significance of Abraham's offering and also we read in Hebrew's that Abraham had not possessed the land promised to him during his lifetime. We know that he only owned the small piece of land in which he buried Sarah. Thus, we see that the promise of God to Abraham is still unfulfilled. It is the promise of the Coming Age! Thus we can see what the Jewish writers who have not recognized their Messiah can't see. We can see the primary significance of these events over the death of the Matriarch.

Footnote:

There are about 8-9 verses which are translated as 'faith in Christ' in most translations. It appears that most, but not all of these should read 'faith of Christ'. The word πιστεως always needs to be translated as 'faith of..' since the word 'of' does not exist by itself in the Greek – it always assumes from the grammatical construction of the sentence or phrase.

Acts 24:24 εις χριστον πιστεως translated to **Christ of faith** ('...ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ περὶ τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν πίστεως...' , which reads '...he heard of him concerning the faith/trust in Christ Jesus...')

Gal 2:16 δικαιούται ἐξ ἔργων ...διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (not) justified by good deeds commanded in the Torah...(but) by/through (the) faith of Jesus the Messiah...; ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ... in order to be justified by the faith of Messiah (Christou) εκ χριστου translated from **faith Christ** KJV: by the **faith of Christ**

Gal.2:20 '.. ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ..' 'which I live by the faith of the Son of God...'

Phil 3:9 KJV: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the **faith of Christ**, the righteousness which is of God by faith: διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ translated **faith (of) Christ from god (δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει**, provides the context of passage reading now '..which is the righteousness (coming) from God by faith.'

Col 1:4 KJV: Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

Col 2:5 YLT: for if even in the flesh I am absent -- yet in the spirit I am with you, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in regard to Christ;

εις χριστον πιστεως - the grammatical context demands '**faith in**' as it is linked to 'ὑμῶν', meaning 'your...', hence the genitive of faith!

2 Tim 3:15 KJV: And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.