

**A Spiritual Encouragement Message**

**September 8, 2020**

**The Father of the Faith**
**by Oscar Velazquez**

Do you know why Abraham is called father Abraham? Or the father of the faith? (The faith, not the many different "faiths" that claim him as father). God the Creator started humankind with Adam, then humans sinned in every possible way and God decided to restart humankind again in Noah, the tenth generation. Ten is a complete perfect number in Scripture. Then another ten generations later (Gn. 5:1-32, 11:10-32) after mankind was spread throughout the world, God started to make the faith available to every nation by giving promises to Abraham. The first time God spoke to Abraham was when he was 75 years of age. That was when God made him a promise to give him descendants and multiply them to the point where all families of the earth are having an opportunity to be blessed through him. “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.“ (Genesis 12:1-7). Abraham obeyed and went and built the first altar to God Almighty in the land promised to him and his offspring.

At 86 years of age Abraham was still able to procreate, but not with his wife Sara, because her time was out of the custom and she was sterile. God gave him a vision reminding him that He will give him a son and descendants. “After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:1-6).

Later when Abraham was 99 years of age, which then it was too old to procreate and just one year before God's promise started to be fulfilled, God tested him by asking him to do something unheard of. For this God even changed his name from “exalted father” to “father of many.” “When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant” (Genesis 17:1-14). But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year” (Genesis 17: 21). Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin” (Genesis 17: 24). Circumcision was not even in his dictionary! First time ever mentioned in the Bible! Abraham was asked to mutilate and inflict the only part of his old body that he was counting on to ever possibly have a child. “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness“ (Romans 4:16-22). That is the process God uses to make him the father of those who believe.

Until Abraham was 100 years old and after God waited 25 years for the perfect moment, when only God could give him a son, by faith Abraham received Isaac. “The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.“ (Genesis 21:1-5). The biggest test came when Abraham's son Isaac, his loved, one was in his teenage years. God tested Abraham's faith again in a way none of us could pass (Genesis 22). For some it’s a sacrifice just to read it. Abraham might not pass some temptations, but he passed every hard test of faith done by God.  After all that, God even started calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 26:24 to Isaac, 28:13 to Jacob. “‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living“ Matthew 22:32) said Jesus. The New Testament explains, “What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, (Romans 4:1-5). Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised“ (Romans 4:9-12).

“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:26-29). Includes us and any who will obey believing.

That is how and why Abraham is our father in the faith and we in Christ are blessed and counted as part of the promises made and fulfilled by God.