

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Jews mocked Him: “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

The answer, of course, is yes, as the Lord taught them: “Before Abraham was, I AM.” He was from the beginning, Uncreated, without beginning or end, begotten of the Father from eternity. Yes, He saw Abraham, as He appeared to Abraham by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as the Lord ate a miraculous meal with Abraham, and as He gave Abraham the promise that even in his old age, Abraham would have a son, and through that Son all the world would be blessed.

Yes, He saw Abraham, as He showed Abraham the debauchery and sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham begged for the lives of the righteous in the city. And yes, He saw Abraham, as He commanded him “Take now your son, your only son Isaac whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering...”

But not only did He see Abraham, Abraham rejoiced to see His Day, and he saw it, and was glad. For on the mountain of the Lord it was provided, and Isaac did not die. God Himself provided the sacrifice. Isaac lived. Abraham was glad. And the promised Seed was borne in the loins of the Patriarchs.

The voice that called to Abraham and stopped the sacrifice of his son is the same voice that stands before the Jews in the Temple sands. It is the One through Whom all things were made that they accuse of being a Samaritan. It is the One that has perfect Unity with God the Father that they accuse of having a demon. It is the Author of Life that they mock for promising rescue from death. It is the God of Abraham and the Prophets that they ridicule by asking “Are you greater than our father Abraham?” The answer, of course, is yes. He is the God of the living.

Isaac was spared. In faith, he allowed himself to be bound and placed on that altar of wood. Abraham had promised his son “God will provide for Himself the Lamb.” Isaac was an insufficient sacrifice. His death would have availed you nothing. God did provide the Lamb. But it wasn’t at the altar of wood upon which Isaac was laid. There a ram took his place, an unwilling ram, tangled in a thicket and held against its will. But the Lamb God would provide would go willingly.

Six centuries later, Moses would give the sign of that Lamb. For there was a venom coursing through the veins of the Israelites in the desert, a fatal venom. Through Moses, God provided a miraculous cure – they made an image of the very creature that was killing them, and they raised it up on a pole. Whoever looked upon that lowest of all creatures raised up on the pole would live. And so it was. If a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

And that is where the accounts of Scripture find their fruition in you. For you, you who dwell in the wilderness of this fallen world, you who live out your life in this place of danger and death, you have been bitten. And you have a venom coursing through your veins. For the flesh you wear is a flawed flesh, an infected flesh, a flesh that brings with it death, the due penalty for sin. The serpent bit your first father, and the fatal flaw of that poison remains in you.

No physician, no emergency room, no earthly doctor can cure you. For among men, there is no cure for death. You live out your life like Isaac, bound, death hovering over you. And it is not only for the sin you inherited. It is for the sins you have daily committed. With the flesh you wear comes the curse “You shall surely die.”

But thanks be to God, God Himself did as Father Abraham promised: He provided the Lamb. Thanks be to God, God Himself provided the cure. For One was raised up on a pole, One who became the image of what was killing you, One who became the lowest of all creatures, that anyone who looks at Him in faith lives.

It was not on that altar of wood built by Abraham, but on the wooden altar of the cross on Calvary’s, that God provided the Lamb. The Apostle writes “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own Blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” For the sacrifices of Old, even of the ram that took Isaac’s place, were insufficient. “How much more”, then, shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the Living God?”

“He is the Mediator of the New Testament, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the First Testament.” The Angel of the Lord called from heaven and stayed the Patriarch’s dagger-filled hand. But no Divine Word stopped the Sacrifice at Golgotha. The spikes did their cruel work.

The cross is the pole upon which He who was made sin for us, He who was made the very image of that which was killing you, the cross is the pole upon which He was lifted up. There, in the darkness of Calvary, He was made the lowest of all creatures, the Sin Bearer, condemned by God and man. It is there that He shed the Blood that avails for your redemption.

Yes, He saw Abraham. He knew what it was for an Only Son to give Himself as a Sacrifice. He stopped the sacrifice of Isaac so that He Himself could take his place on an altar of wood, and die the death, the perfect, holy, sin-covered death that brings life to all men. And that life comes to you as did Israel’s cure, by looking to Christ on the Cross and believing.

For there, He was covered in your sin. There, His Glory was veiled in His Suffering. There, His Image was veiled with the crimson veil of His own Blood. Look to the cross. Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away your sin! Look upon Him in faith, and live. Believe that His death is for you. Believe that His victory of death brings your justification. Look upon Christ on the cross. Meditate on His Passion and death. For in them there is life. In them is the cure for your death.

When the Lord visited Abraham, the Patriarch prepared a meal. But today it is the One who died for you that prepares a Meal. The God of Abraham, the Only-Begotten Son that gave His life on the altar of wood, the One raised up on the cross for your healing, gives you to eat of the fruits of His cross – His Body and Blood.

He bids you take and eat, take and drink, that the benefits of His perfect life, His Holy Passion, His precious death, and His glorious resurrection be made yours. For He made Himself a

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Sacrifice, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For it is to you as He promised: “If anyone keeps My Word, he shall never see death.” So you, dear Christian, you, O Redeemed of Christ, you, with the Prophets and with Father Abraham, you live. You rejoice to see His Day, and you are glad.

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