

# Abraham's Sight of Christ's Day

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn together to John chapter 8 and today we're looking at verse 56. John chapter 8 at verse 56. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.

We're going to round off our studies of Abraham's life by looking at this text where Jesus, reflecting on Abraham, said out this statement that Abraham had seen his day and in seeing it that he rejoiced.

Jesus was not rejected because people didn't understand him. It's very clear from this passage itself that as he disputed here with the Jews that were listening to him and hearing him setting out his claims that they didn't reject him because they couldn't follow what he was saying it was the opposite in fact.

They rejected him because they clearly understood what he was saying and what he was claiming for himself but they just were not prepared to accept it. In fact they were outraged at his claims that he was placing himself on the same level as God effectively presenting himself as God having come to them and having the very qualities of God as you see there that amazing verse, verse 48 when they had asked him how could it be that he had seen Abraham when he was not yet 50 years old and Jesus answered in terms of the Old Testament chapter 3 of Exodus truly truly I say to you before Abraham was I am not I was but I am the same words that God used when he revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush and where Moses had asked what shall I say to the people when I go back and who has sent me when they ask me tell them said God that I am has sent you I am that I am the eternal and changing God and that's who Jesus himself is and that's what he was presenting to these people in his ministry there that's what they accepted that's what they heard but that's what they didn't accept that's what they refused to accept and therefore they rejected him what we want to do is look at this verse verse 56 as he refers to Abraham it says first of all that Abraham saw Christ's day and we have to look at first of all how that could have been and what was involved in that and then look at the rejoicing that's mentioned there as well your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day he saw it and was glad Abraham saw Christ's day first of all he saw it while he lived the ESV translation isn't perhaps the best there where it says your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day the language that's used in the text of the Bible there in the Greek text really means he rejoiced because he did see it it's not that he rejoiced in the prospect that one day he would see it it's not saying to us that

[ 3 : 25 ] Abraham rejoiced in knowing that one day in the future he would see Christ's day as if he were talking about heaven or even the final state of glory what Jesus was saying is your father Abraham did see my day he saw it while he lived he saw it for himself he was able to rejoice because of what he saw not because of what he would one day see and he was glad and saw in other words this thing that he saw this day of Christ that Abraham saw was something that was true of him while he lived during the course of his life we've gone through what Genesis says of his life in some detail and during his life that he lived in the world he saw the day of Christ so what did Jesus mean by this day what did Jesus mean by my day and how could it be that Abraham saw Christ's day thousands of years before Christ had actually come into the world in his ministry what is this day well let's let's say in summary first of all what it is then we'll come back to look at how Abraham came to see it and that will help us explain to us as well how it is that this day is really the day of salvation in Christ because that is really what Jesus meant it has to do with salvation as accomplished by Jesus Christ it has to do with

Christ's ministry in the world it has to do with what we know now because we have the New Testament and we have the events that are recorded in it as having taken place the death of Jesus the incarnation the coming of Jesus to take our nature the death of Jesus the resurrection of Jesus the ascension of Jesus the gospel going out into the whole world the church being established the

anticipation of Christ's return all of these things have already been established in the world in the church in God's people that is what we know of as the whole span if you like of salvation certainly as accomplished by Christ from his incarnation onwards and that is what Abraham actually saw he saw something of Christ's life Christ's death Christ's resurrection the gospel of Christ the covenant of God with his people the return of Christ the final glory he saw something of that now of course we are not saying that he saw that with the same clarity with which you and I are able to see it you can see it far more clearly than Abraham could because you have a complete Bible you have a complete

New Testament especially and in that New Testament you have a record of the ministry of Christ of his miracles of his speaking of the events of his life as they recorded for us of his death and resurrection especially of his ascension to glory and then you have got the other parts of the New Testament where the theology of that where the teaching the meaning of that the way in which it bears upon salvation and the unfolding of what salvation means Paul's letters John's writings Peter's letters James the book of Revelation all of the New Testament is taken out of if you like or stems from flows from the ministry of Christ in this world and his death and resurrection and ascension particularly you have all of that in its clarity Abraham did not actually see with anything like the same clarity that you see these things and nevertheless he saw them

Jesus says which means he saw them at least in their outline he saw the main features of them he saw them to the extent that he was able to rejoice we'll see in a minute that that's a very deep word he rejoiced in what he saw and what he saw was the day of Christ it couldn't be that he saw them as clearly as you see them because for one thing these events of Christ's ministry had not yet taken place and however much you believe in something that's going to happen in the future there's no way you're going to be able to actually see it as clearly as those who are alive when it happens the event itself carries with it a clarity that you cannot see fully in anticipation of it and that's something like what the Old Testament let's try and illustrate it like this you know that period just before the dawn

I'm not saying that I'm up very often at that time when it's still not dawn even but there is a period just before the dawn when it's not totally dark and yet the light you've got is very very thin so that you can still say well it's darkness but it's not totally dark there's a very thin sliver of light if you like that eventually develops into the dawn which then goes onwards into the fullness of day well the Old Testament is a bit like that period it's not totally dark but the light that you have in it is very thin it's veiled it's something that you know is going to develop further into the brightness of day you can see certain features of things in outline form perhaps even somewhere here and there a little bit of detail but mostly it's just a very thin kind of light that then eventually comes to break open and become the dawn of day in the New

[ 9 : 18 ] Testament or you can say that's really in a sense what the Old Testament is as it anticipates the New Testament age and the things of the New Testament age and Abraham and others in that Old Testament period in that thinness of light they were given sometimes individuals like Abraham more insight into things than other people generally had people like Abraham Moses David some of the prophets for example they were able to have an insight God gave them an insight more than usual more than the others of their generation into those things of the New Testament but it's still a question really just how much they themselves understood into the prophets for example one of the great questions is how much did Isaiah himself understand of what we know as Isaiah 53 nothing like as much as you understand of it because you are seeing it reading back from the actual events of

Christ's life that are prophesied in it and as you are reading back from what you know is the event itself then you are obviously able to see more of the detail in it you can illustrate it something like this supposing you were taken blindfolded and you were told that you were going to be taken into a certain building a building that had certain characteristics certain architectural features and was filled with things that were worth seeing supposing you were taken blindfolded and sat in one of the rooms of that building and it was during this period just before the dawn or during this pre-dawn period the blindfold is taken off and you are told by the person who is taking you there you have to sit there and just look around you while the dawn comes in and then afterwards when the daylight appears when you sit there at the period you are taken in just at the moment you are taking in you are looking around you and you are trying to work out what this building is and you see certain features of it perhaps you can see some of the arches or the pillars or whatever it is that

distinguishes its architecture you can make them out you can see the shape of them you can perhaps see the shape of some of the objects in that room you can see whether they are tall or round or whatever you can see the outline of them but then as the light comes in as the dawn comes in as the light starts streaming through the windows you begin to realise the kind of place it is you realise this is a building that is something like a museum or maybe an art gallery you are beginning to really work out as you look around you what the place is for and what it is about then as the light increases you are able to see yes it is exactly that it is a museum and it is full of objects of art as well it has got all of these collections and you are able to see the architecture of the building itself that is built in such a way that lends itself to the showing of these objects and you are able to see the paintings hanging on the wall the objects in the glass cases not only so but you can get up and you can go over to them and you can read the plaque that is there beside them and as you look at the painting in front of you you can go so far as to even make out the artist's brush marks that is the difference between the full light of day and where you were to begin with that is the transition from the old testament into the light of the new you can only see in Abraham's day the outlines of the painting you can see the main features in it very much in that outline form but you go to that painting of Christ's salvation that the new testament has painted for you now that the light of the new testament rather has come to shine onto and display it in much more detail and you can see there the artist's paint and brush marks if you like and really all that remains for us in the new testament age is to meet the artist himself when he comes back again to this world

Abraham saw Christ's day he saw the day of salvation in Christ he saw the main features of it he was able to rejoice in what he saw but how did he see it how do we know that that is the case where do we find out from Abraham's life that this is in fact true what I've just said what we've been looking at the way we've been putting things and the things that we've said this day means the day of accomplishment the day of salvation accomplished by Christ where in Abraham's life is that well it's really throughout his life and this is one of the great things about studying a passage of the Bible consecutively like we've done with Abraham where you see the various features of his life as the Bible records them built into a composite picture if you like a thing that has all of these different elements to it and you look at each of them and you look at the whole thing together as you go through it there are three pivotal events in the life of

Abraham as we've seen it that help us understand how it could be that he saw the day of Christ and where he saw it and the three pivotal events the three really significant standout events if you like amongst many others are first of all the birth of Isaac secondly the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah and thirdly the covenant or the promise the covenant promise of God that he promised and that came first actually in the sequence chronologically God gave him the promise of the inheritance and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him then comes the son of promise the child Isaac and then comes the offering of Mount Moriah further on we're taking them in the other sequence we're taking them that and we'll see in a minute why first of all the birth of Isaac then the sacrifice of Isaac and then the wider promise of God and the covenant promise that promises to Abraham an inheritance this land this Canaan and that all nations of the earth will be blessed through that's the gospel the gospel blessing now Isaac was born as you know as we've seen we've gone through the way that he was given the promise and then over 20 years after that Isaac is born it's a long period between the promise being given and the promise being fulfilled and we saw that Abraham's faith was tested at many times and that was one of the places one of the ways by which he was tested as to his faith and his obedience and his dependence on God and his love of God God gave the promise but it's God's time it's God's program as to when the promise will be fulfilled and eventually it is fulfilled and you remember what happened when Isaac was born and why he was called Isaac Abraham laughed Isaac is called laughter or he laughs and we saw that that is not to do with the laughter of ridicule with the laughter of just an ordinary type of something that you find funny or amusing it's rather the laughter that comes from joy it's the laughter that comes from something deep in your soul that you've come to appreciate that you've come to be satisfied with where you actually bring before

[17:16] God an outpouring of your heart in this rejoicing laughter if you like which is why God had said to Abraham you will call him Isaac laughter he laughs this son is a source of joy to Abraham this son is a source of joy not just because God has fulfilled a promise to him that he would have such a son but because Abraham sees in it God's truthfulness God's word being fulfilled something about God that applies to the future then he's told to take this son and we followed Abraham and his son Isaac when he's about seventeen years old or so up to Mount Moriah as God had commanded

him to sacrifice him there for God to God remember Isaac's cutting question my father behold the wood the fire where's the lamb for a bird for a bird offering remember

Abraham's wonderful answer you can see the way that the day of Christ is forming more and more in his mind as the experiences in his life go on especially in his onward relationship with God my son God will provide for himself a lamb for a bird offering and then you follow him up to Mount Moriah you see him laying Isaac on the wood and you then find God intervening suddenly and dramatically pointing out as a ram caught by his horns in a thicket that he has to offer in place of Isaac Abraham as we saw had given Isaac to God he was as dead in Abraham's heart as he would have been literally supposing he had actually plunged the knife into him which he was ready to do the fact that he was substitute with a ram the fact that Hebrews 11 comments on that as in fact a symbol of resurrection to

Abraham the fact that Isaac was not killed literally and given back to him Abraham viewed that spiritually as a sign of resurrection of life beyond death of life over death of victory over death and the fact that it was by a substitute and a substitutionary death which involved a sacrifice to God you see Abraham was able to see into that by faith and he's able to see the outline of something of the day of Christ he's able to see salvation from God salvation in terms of a sacrifice salvation in terms of a substitute salvation that actually includes resurrection it's building up and then you put that along with the promise that was there from the start that Abraham took with him into all of these circumstances that Abraham thought upon and reflected upon and wanted to know more of in terms of the promise God had given him where he would be a blessing and he would bless the people of the world through him where the gospel eventually would come to the nations through the descendant of Abraham through

Jesus Christ and where you have all of that together God's covenant promises God's commitment to blessing through the seed of Abraham through the descendant of Abraham through Jesus Christ all of the things we mentioned in regard to Isaac and his offering and Isaac's birth and the laughter there's the whole jigsaw you put it all together and what is it?

It is the day of Christ for Abraham he sees the features of Christ day at least in their outline form he understands something of the salvation of God through the events that God has brought him through in his life and as he does so he rejoices he rejoices in the day of Christ in the day of salvation isn't that what you and I do?

[ 21 : 47 ] Don't you see the day of Christ? in a similar fashion to the way Abraham saw it Abraham saw it by faith using these events and using these things that had happened to his experiences in those events that God had arranged for him and all of that put together he saw the day of Christ you see the day of Christ you see it more clearly because you're using the gospel you're using the word of God you're using the written word and God has helped us by things such as the sacraments that he's given his church by baptism and the thing you see happening in baptism outwardly by the Lord's Supper and what you see outwardly in the Lord's Supper it's a wonderful thing that God has given us we've been looking at the creation of man in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 the last few weeks and one of the things that is so important to realize is that God has given us faculties that we use when we exercise faith in order to understand and come to a greater appreciation of his salvation for example when you're at the

Lord's Supper you don't just take the bread and the cup and you just eat and you drink without thinking of what you're doing it's not like an ordinary meal to you you take the bread with the words of Jesus in your mind this is my body this represents my body this is what signifies my death and this cup is the new covenant in my blood this is God's bond with his people sealed with the blood of Christ with the death of Christ you exercise your sight in seeing those things you exercise your taste your sense of smell even but certainly your taste as you take them into your mouth physically and you translate that as your faith is exercised into something meaningful and spiritual and important to you that you are spiritually drawing your life from Christ as these things represent so there's there's things where physically you see things you use your senses of sight of sound to hear the word of hearing to hear the word of taste even with such as the

Lord's supper all of that is used all of these faculties are used and through them and by exercising faith you actually see the day of Christ you appreciate the things of salvation and you see them not just in outline as Abraham did you see them in much more detail you see them with the brush marks of the artist fresh on them if you like you and don't we rejoice do we let me ask a question to myself and to yourself are you rejoicing in your God and in his salvation today look into your heart listen to

your heart study your heart what's it saying to you is it saying

I know something of what Abraham had when he rejoiced in seeing the day of Christ because my soul as I listen to the gospel as I hear this word is really kicking it's something that's filling me with satisfaction it's something that gives me real satisfaction deep satisfaction lasting satisfaction it's something that I know does not belong to this world itself it's something that I know is transporting me right into the future it's something that I know I can build my life upon this day of salvation this accomplishment of the day of Christ. Gabriel saw my day and was glad he rejoiced in seeing it. And this is no ordinary rejoicing because this is a word the New Testament uses of a really deep rejoicing. It's a strong word.

It's a word that means his soul was really deeply moved. He was exercised in his soul. His heart just leapt and pounded into this joy, into this vibrant rejoicing.

[ 26 : 48 ] Not just a wee ripple. It's a tremor. It's a rejoicing. It's a real deep gladness in the soul of Abraham.

And you know what it's like when you're waiting for somebody you love that's been away for some time. Let's imagine somebody that's been away for months, maybe even years. Somebody really close to you. Somebody you deeply love.

And you're waiting at the airport. And as you see them and as you embrace them what does your heart say? Probably your lips say it as well in the words, but your heart certainly says it's so good to see you.

That's what Abraham was saying of the day of Christ. It's so good to see you. It's so good that I can see this. Even what I'm able to see of it.

Abraham rejoiced at the day of Christ when he saw it. As he saw it. It wasn't just a seeing of it in one brief moment. Like we've said it was a seeing of it that increased and increased in his understanding as his life went on.

[ 28 : 11 ] He was adding from one experience to the next the things that he was seeing in outline of the day of salvation. And the more he was seeing into it the more he saw of the outline the more he appreciated the more added to his gladness of heart.

He rejoiced. He rejoiced in it. And your rejoicing and mine is based on the same thing. In a sense Abraham's joy really belonged to the future.

That's an interesting thing itself isn't it? Think about that. There's Abraham rejoicing really in his own day during his lifetime but what he was rejoicing in or over or about belonged to the future age.

It belonged to the age of the New Testament. He was seeing into that new age in outline at least and yet able to rejoice in it in his own day.

But the joy that he had properly belonged if you like to the age of fulfillment to the day of Christ. It was that joy belonging to the day yet Abraham experienced it long before the day dawned.

[ 29 : 26 ] And that's how it is to for ourselves in a sense. The joy that a Christian has is experienced here in this world.

Here during this life. But it's a joy that properly belongs to heaven. It has the qualities of heaven about it. It has the qualities of glory about it.

even though it's now in this world that you're experiencing it as a Christian. What is it that makes us say that? Well you remember Peter in his first epistle put it this way 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 8 described there about the relation between Jesus and his people.

When he was saying that even though they do not now see him yet believing you rejoice same word that's used for Abraham here in John 8 56 you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Just think of that phrase that description of this joy it's joy unspeakable and full of glory. And that's he saying is what you Christians as Peter is writing to them that's what you're experiencing now that's the kind of joy that you have it's a joy that's inexpressible he didn't mean by that that it's a joy you can't speak of at all but what he meant was it's a joy that you cannot adequately put into words or describe adequately because it belongs to the age of glory it belongs to heaven you cannot put language in this world in a way that describes fully and adequately and comprehensively and perfectly something that belongs to the world of heaven you just can't put it all into language it's probably true to say that you can sing it out better that you can describe it in words in any case that's what

[ 31 : 39 ] Peter was saying and the remarkable thing is that Peter uses that same word rejoice not just in that verse in verse 8 of the first chapter it's also in verse 5 and verse 5 is filled with suffering though now if necessary or as necessary you are in heaviness through various testings that's how

he puts it you are in heaviness through various testings yet you rejoice in whom you rejoice in this Jesus you rejoice though now for the present you experience these trials these testings these sufferings that's how Abraham was he saw the day of Christ yet he was in the midst of his own testings and trials but he rejoiced in what he saw as it belonged to an age beyond himself beyond his own beyond his own age and when you and I rejoice in

Christ we're conscious of the fact that it's a wonderful thing to rejoice in Christ it's a wonderful rejoicing it's a solid joy it is something you appreciate and experience now but really it's actually the joy of heaven begun it's the embryonic form of heaven's joy that's why Peter calls it a joy inexpressible and full of glory you have glory begun in your experience believingly in this life it's there in your joy it's full of glory God made us for a purpose evolution knows nothing of this but God's creation this is what it's all about man's chief end what is it it's to glorify God and to enjoy him forever that's the question I put to myself from this passage that's the question this passage and God through this passage is putting to you today are you really enjoying God you are if you rejoice in the day of Christ if he is yours if you know him savingly if he's the basis of all your hopes then you have that joy that no one will take from you let's pray oh Lord our God we thank you for the joy that you give to all who believe in you for that deep and lasting joy that is more than the mere exercise of our emotions we thank you Lord for the sense of satisfaction that you give to your people when they come to appreciate their completeness in you and we pray that that joy oh Lord will increasingly be manifested in our lives help us to express it help us though it is joy inexpressible yet help us to speak about it and to communicate it to others help us to do so especially not by speaking about it but by our rejoicing itself and enable us Lord to be thankful that you have given to your people in this world even in that joy a sense of glory a sense of what lies beyond the present age and a glimpse into the eternal joy and joy glorified in heaven with you here is no one except us for Jesus sake Amen Amen Amen Let's ■ to ■■■■■■■■ on the ■■■■■ to go to proof of