



Who is Yeshua the Messiah?

Part 6: The Firstborn God

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{NOTE: The actual video recording varied from these notes to some degree, but this “transcript” gives you a general idea of the direction of the message.}

{Title slide} Shabbat shalom, brothers and sisters. Last week we spent most of the time examining Yeshua’s virgin conception in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. We looked at how His birth as the Son of Man and the Son of God in the flesh was not a moment of creation, because Yeshua did not begin to exist when He was born. As we will celebrate this coming week, and as John explains in Chapter 1 [verse 14] of His Gospel, Yeshua was “with God” and “was God” and then became flesh to tabernacle [skēnoō (σκηνόω)] among us. He is the unique God, sent of the Father. He is Immanuel—God with us—who taught us how to perfectly obey His commandments and then called on us to follow after Him into His Kingdom. He came to offer Himself as a perfect, one-time sacrifice for our atonement, so we can come in close to our Holy God. None of us is without sin and capable of a relationship with God outside of His grace. It was by His own power that Yeshua rose from the dead—He said in John 10:18, “I have power to lay ... down [My life], and I have power to take it again”—and in so doing, He became the firstfruits offering in Heaven and the firstborn of the dead, ready to receive His inheritance, which is an eternal Kingdom made up of His set-apart people. The second part of last week’s message separated the idea of Yeshua being “the begotten” or “unique” Son of God from His virgin birth, because these terms point forward to His resurrection and not back to His birth. He was “brought forth” from the grave to enter His eternal glory, which He had beforehand from eternity with the Father. He is, indeed, one-in-being with the Father, and the Father and the Son are One—with the Holy Spirit.

{New slide} In John 17:5, in fact, Yeshua said: “Now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory I had with you before the world was.” Many people get tripped

up that the Son is talking with the Father here, saying there are clearly two entities involved here. And there is an aspect to God's nature that manifests differently—sometimes at the same time as we see here, but it's important to express again that we have One God. “Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad,” as we read in Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear O Israel, the LORD (יהוה) our God, the LORD (יהוה) is One.” We have One God, and He eternally exists and reveals Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And perhaps this is a good opportunity to quickly point out that we don't subscribe to the dogma of “modalism,” which is a known heresy that expresses God attending to only one mode of His essence at a time. Even in John 17:5 we can see God manifesting as the Father and the Son at the same time, and so the idea of God manifesting in different modes doesn't hold up. As I've explained several times before in this series, God's complex nature is impossible to clearly and succinctly define ontologically, while—at the same time—God's complex nature is very clearly explained throughout Scripture, and so we ought to study Scripture intensely to understand Him. The Bible, regardless of whether the original language is Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, was written by Hebrews, and Hebrews explain the Truth of every subject through action. Here, John was able to communicate the Truth that the Father and the Son have distinctions, but they share glory together, and the glory that they share precedes Creation. This is a theme that's important for today's message.

{New slide} I want to pull this string just a little bit further. Take special note of the word “glory” in John 17:5. It's doxa (δόξα) in the Greek and kāvôd (כָּבוֹד) in the Hebrew. This is the same word used in Isaiah 42:8, which reads: “I am Yahweh (יהוה), that is My name; and My glory [kāvôd (כָּבוֹד)] I will not give to another, ...” This is not the only verse where God explains this. In Isaiah 48:11, God expressed plainly another time: “I will not give My glory to another.” I'm going to tell you right now, if Yeshua is not God, this is a blasphemous statement that violates the first and second commandments from the decalogue. As I'll show you later on in this series, John 17:5 is the type of statement that led to Yeshua's crucifixion by those who didn't believe in Him. We can't look at Yeshua's words as recorded in Scripture and say He was just a good rabbi or just a prophet, or even that He was a great King or under-cased “lord” or “master.” As C.S. Lewis pointed out, expanding on apologetics offered earlier by Thomas Aquinas, Yeshua clearly claimed to be God, and we have to respond to this fact. We can see this in John 17:5. God said He would not give His glory to another, but Yeshua said that the Father would glorify Him together with Himself, in the same way that the Father and Son shared glory before Creation. The argument goes like this: Yeshua claimed to be God. Anyone who claims to be God is one of three things: a liar, which is to say a false prophet who says he is God but isn't and he knows he isn't; a lunatic,

which is to say a man who says he's God but isn't and he doesn't know he isn't; or He's LORD, which is to acknowledge that Yeshua said He is God, and He is indeed God. Now, if we look back at Isaiah 48, verse 13, our One God who "will not give [His] glory to another" added: "My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens..." This section helps to explain how the glory of God could be shared by Father and Son. We know from Yeshua's own mouth, as recorded in John 4:24, that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24), something Paul reiterated in 2nd Corinthians 3:17. Does a Spirit have a right hand? Not in a physical sense, no. But we also know that God created Man in His Image, and human beings typically have a right hand that acts according to our will. These are metaphorical images that are meant to communicate the deeper truths of God's complex nature. Yeshua is the right hand of God Who created the heavens and the Earth according to the will of the Father. He eternally preexisted this event, sharing in the glory of God. Following His resurrection, He would share this glory again. In brief, as Philippians 2:5-6 points out, "... Messiah Yeshua ... being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,..." He wasn't stealing identity—He was sharing in the glory of God, which God will not give to another. In other words: "Hear O Israel, the LORD your God, the LORD is One." John 17:24 provides another witness, where Yeshua explained His desire for His followers to observe this Truth, and observe it we will. We read: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." And this is the verse that sets up our topic for today in Part 6 of our series called, "Who is Yeshua the Messiah?" Today's answer: He's "the Firstborn God." This concept doesn't make any sense if we consider the plain English meaning of "firstborn," but like the idea of our "begotten God," which we explored last week, the idea of our "firstborn God" refers to Yeshua's resurrection from the dead and the consequences of His finished work. Neither word describes His birth.

{New slide} I want to revisit a verse I cited last week to move us further into today's topic, because it presents the main point in a rather straightforward manner and also allows us to dispel two heresies right upfront. In Colossians 1:15-18, the Apostle Paul wrote: "[Yeshua] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." Let's stop here for a moment and explore the idea of "the firstborn" in this context. As we discussed last week, some say Yeshua was created at His birth. So let's ponder this further: If Yeshua came into being at the virgin birth, how could He possibly be the firstborn over all creation? What about Adam? What about Noah? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses? Weren't they, and so many more, born before Yeshua? We know this to be true. So how could Yeshua be "the firstborn over all creation" and also created at

His birth? It doesn't make logical sense. Nevertheless, it's the same question the Jews asked Yeshua during a conversation recorded in John 8, verses 56-59, where the LORD said: "'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.' Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?'" If Yeshua was created at His birth, this was a valid position the Jewish leaders were taking here. How could Yeshua be a contemporary of Abraham if he was less than 50 years old? Yeshua put this question to rest very quickly in His response. He replied: "'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.'" It's an intentionally ungrammatical statement, and when Yeshua said it, He received an important response. We read: "Then they took up stones to throw at Him..." Now, I plan to explore this and the other "I AM" passages in more depth later in this series, but I want to give you an overview today to put to rest the idea that Yeshua was created at birth. When He said, "before Abraham was, I AM," Yeshua was making Himself equal with God, and this is why the Jewish leaders picked up stones to stone Him. If it wasn't true, the statement was blasphemous. The words "I AM" here come from "Egō Eimi (ἐγὼ εἰμί)" in the Greek, and these are the same words used in the Greek version of Exodus 3:14, which is the verse where God announced His name to Moses. In the Lexham English Septuagint version of Exodus, which was translated from the Greek version of the Tanakh (Old Testament), we read: "And God said to Moses, saying 'I AM the One Who Exists.'" That's [Egō Eimi (ἐγὼ εἰμί) ho ōn (ὁ ὢν)] in the Greek, and "ōn" here is just the singular form of "Eimi." It's I AM that I AM," the present form of the Greek "to be." In other words, He is the ever-existent one. In the Hebrew, this is "e'yeh ash'er e'yeh (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה)"—"I Am that I Am." Yeshua literally said the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "e'yeh (אֶהְיֶה)" in His response to the Jewish leaders. This is why they picked up stones to throw at Him. He wasn't just saying that He preexisted Abraham, He was making Himself equal with God. Thus, as Paul wrote, He is the "image of the invisible God."

{New slide} Is there another possible meaning for Yeshua as "the firstborn of creation"? Let's look at this next. As we read in John 17, Yeshua possessed glory with the Father before the world was created, and so when we add that Yeshua is "the firstborn of creation" and God's "only begotten Son," how do we parse this? Let me tell you another way we shouldn't understand these concepts first. Arius, the fourth century presbyter of Alexandria who was rightly labeled a heretic by church leaders at the time, used verses like these to explain that God created Yeshua before creation. Does that even make sense? "Arianism" and later "Unitarianism" focuses in on verses like we covered from Proverbs 8 a few weeks ago concerning the wisdom of God, among others, to develop a dogma that God somehow created wisdom and the Word of God

before He created the worlds. This isn't logical. With what wisdom would God create wisdom with if wisdom was created? Likewise, under what pretense would God create His Word who would become flesh and redeem us from our sins? If God is eternal, and Yeshua was before creation with Him, doesn't that also make Him eternal? Arius said "no," and here's the argument he presented around AD 324 in a letter he wrote to Eusebius defending his position. We read: "we say and believe, and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way unbegotten, even in part; and that he does not derive his subsistence from any matter; but that by his own will and counsel he has subsisted before time, and before ages, as perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that he existed not before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established. For he was not unbegotten." If you're confused by this language—good. It should confuse you. The devil is the architect of confusion. The summary is this: Arius believed that the word "begotten," much like "firstborn," explain that Yeshua was created before creation. Again, it doesn't make sense, and the context of these words bring out their far more significant meaning that dispels the entire theory. We spoke about the concept of "begotten" last week in some detail. The Greek word "gennaō (γεννάω)," which is translated "begotten" in several verses, means to "bring forth." The Greek word "monogenés (μονογενής)," which is also translated "begotten" in several verses, means "unique" or "one and only." The translations "unique" and "one and only" begin to unveil a proper understanding of Yeshua, but even the translation "to bring forth," when understood in context, explains a different Truth than the deception that Arius brought to the table. Take it's use in Hebrews 5:5, for instance, where we read: "So also Messiah did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" Recall what Yeshua said in John 17:5, "O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory I had with you before the world was." When we read this together with Hebrews 5:5, is it possible to understand the word "begotten" as creation? Within this context, God brought Yeshua forth to be High Priest on the day He glorified Him, the day Yeshua was praying for in John 17, and that was the day of His resurrection from the dead. This was the day that Yeshua became a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. This was the day that Yeshua was begotten. It is also the same day that He became the firstborn. Both of these terms point to Yeshua's resurrection from the dead.

{New slide} With that, let's dig a little deeper into the context of Colossians 1:15-18, and what I just explained to you is going to become more apparent. We read in full: "[Yeshua] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible,

whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Think about these words, because they define our term. As the “firstborn over all creation,” what Paul means to say is that Yeshua is the “firstborn from the dead;” in other words, the first to be resurrected into new life. He is God with us—Immanuel—born of a virgin, yes, but preexisting all of creation as the Holy Spirit of God Who came to tabernacle in Mary’s womb and then come forth from it. Yeshua gave His life blood for us on the cross, and then He became the “prōtotokos (πρωτότοκος),” in the Greek, which literally means “firstborn” or “first-begotten.” In the HELPS Word-studies resource, which considers Greek words in their first-century usage to help clarify their meaning, “prōtótokos,” especially as used in Colossians 1:16 in particular, refers to Messiah Yeshua “as the first to experience glorification at His resurrection. For this, and countless other reasons, Yeshua is “preeminent”—the unequivocal Sovereign over all creation. He is the first to be resurrected from death, and now He reigns in His glory from the throne of Heaven. Yet, He is also before “all things and in Him all things consist.” Do “all things” exclude God? Hardly! The Greek word for “things” is “pantōn (πάντων),” from the root “pas (πᾶς),” and this word means “the totality of the whole,” “any and every,” “of every kind,” “without any addition.” I believe Paul has made a straightforward case here that Yeshua is God who came in the flesh for the purpose of humanity’s redemption, and He has become the firstborn who has inherited all things in heaven and on earth, including the eternal throne of God. This is consistent with what Yeshua prayed to the Father—that He might be glorified together with God in the same glory they shared since before creation. God created the world through Him and for Him, so that He might preeminently reign over those who follow Him in His example. Paul explained these Truths another way in 1st Corinthians 15:20-23, our church’s theme passage, where we read: “But now Messiah is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits, afterward those who are Messiah’s at His coming.” According to Leviticus 23, the firstfruits sacrifice was given as an offering to God so the rest of the barley harvest could subsequently be enjoyed. In like manner, Yeshua was born as a man so He could become the firstborn man to inherit the Kingdom of God and therefore rule over it. The rest of us will join Yeshua “at His coming”—when He returns—on the Last Day—at the Resurrection of the Dead; we covered all this during our series on the Elementary

Principles of Messiah Yeshua. Yeshua was the first to rise into new life, and many brethren will follow Him. God willing: you and me, also!

{New slide} Earlier when we spoke about Isaiah 48, God explained that He would not give His glory to another, and as we've explored, Yeshua asked God to glorify Him and also explained that this glory was something He had before. Within that passage, God emphasized, "...I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last..." This is one of the titles of the Father—of Yahweh. As we also noted earlier, God explained to Moses that He is the great "I AM" in Exodus 3. In Revelation chapter 1, the Apostle John presented a very interesting introduction to His prophetic work that continues to unveil the underlying Truths of God's identity in this way. Starting in verse 4, we read: "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Messiah Yeshua, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood..." Let's unpack this. John was writing to the seven churches in Asia, and seven is the number of perfection in Scripture. His letter was written for the complete assembly of God's people, and as he continued, the Apostle offered a blessing from God to the Church, fulfilling a priestly role. He described God as "Him who is and who was and who is to come"—the great "I Am." This is the Father Yahweh, who is the ever existent one, but he didn't stop there. He next described God as "the seven Spirits who are before His throne," meaning the complete presence of the Holy Spirit, as well as "Messiah Yeshua, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth" who forgave our sins by His blood. John's blessing conveys the Father, the Spirit and the Son as One God, and Messiah Yeshua is presented here as the "firstborn" because of the forgiveness He offered to us through His blood. The passage continues with more imagery that we could spend weeks on. It's awesome! But I want you to see how the imagery develops in verse 17, where we read this: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Who is He in this verse? He is none other than "One like the Son of Man," described in His glory. He was girded with gold, had hair as white as the snow, eyes like flames of fire, feet like fine brass, a thunderous voice like the sound of many waters, and a face that shone like the sun in full strength. Wouldn't you fall at His feet as dead if you saw Him like this? In John's humility, God raised him up. Continuing, we read: "But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I Am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.'" We read in Isaiah 48 that Yahweh is "the first" and "also the last." Here in Revelation it is clear that Yeshua is "He who lives," who "was dead," and is now "alive forevermore," the great I AM, but

also that He is the first and the last—the One who came to die and then rise up as the firstborn, and also the One who will come on the Last Day to raise up His people to Himself. Indeed, He who was before all things now lives interceding for us from the glory of His throne, and He has promised to return in His glory at the end of all things to raise His people from the dead to dwell with Him forever.

{New slide} As God's people, we are "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven," according to Hebrews 12:23. The firstborn is Yeshua, our High Priest, our King, and our Judge, Who will raise up "the spirits of just men"—our souls—and make us "perfect," just as He is perfect. Through Yeshua, who is "the visible form of the invisible God," the very image of God on the earth, we have a living example to follow into eternity. This is how the Father "predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son." It is by following Yeshua's example that we become "the firstborn among many brethren." Those who "do the will of the Father" as Yeshua did will be raised up on the Last Day. We read in John 6:40, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." The writer of Hebrews explained in chapter 1, verses 2-6, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" Do you see in this passage how all the terms and concepts we've been studying come together? Yeshua was begotten in the resurrection, and He became the firstborn of the dead at that time, but when this firstborn comes again into the world to raise up His people for Himself, all the angels of God will worship Him—they even worship Him now. We are His inheritance, and He will indeed have preeminence over His assembly that He created by His works for His own glory when He returns. Notice: "all the angels of God will worship Him." Did not God command us to have no other gods before Him? Did He not command us to worship and serve Him alone? What applies to us certainly also applies to the angels in Heaven. You see, as we're about to celebrate Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) next week, I think you will find that God seeks and has always sought to build an intimate relationship with His creation. He desires to live among us. This is the inheritance that He created for Himself.

{New slide} God became like one of us, but then rose back up to His glory so that He could prepare a place for us, as He explained in John 14, starting in verse 1. We read:

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” He was talking about our eternal inheritance, and in that inheritance He has preeminence. He was talking about His firstborn status. And as we read on, He presented additional information that explains why the angels are going to worship Him. Starting in verse 6, we read: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” This is not ambiguous. It is apparent that a man cannot say these things. Yeshua is either a liar, a lunatic, or LORD—those are your choices. He is the visible image of the invisible God—one in being with the Father. If we have seen Him, we have seen the Father. If we see His example, we see the Way of God. Our Messiah is in every way God, and there is no other way to join Him in the inheritance He is preparing for us unless we see Him in this way. Do you have eyes to see? Do you have ears to hear? Our firstborn God has been trying to explain Himself and we ought to be sure to listen.

{New slide} We’re going to shift gears. If the terms “begotten” and “firstborn” truly mean what I’ve been explaining, then there ought to be evidence for it in the prophetic writings. There is a lot of evidence, and we can’t possibly get to it all! Historic account after historic account shows firstborn status given to someone other than the child that was actually born first. It is given to those who receive their father’s inheritance. There is one case in particular that showcases this best and also serves as a prophetic template for Yeshua’s coming. It is the story of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac as well as Hagar and Ishmael. You see, God called Abraham out from his fathers’ pagan lands to worship the Father alone, and the LORD promised Abraham an inheritance. We read in Genesis 12:1-2: “Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.” The passage continues into verse 3, which I don’t have on the screen. It read: “I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” OK, so let’s just look at this on the surface. God promised land, a multitude of descendants, a great name, and many blessings for generations to come until all the earth would be blessed from His efforts. This all sounded great to Abraham and he obeyed the LORD, leaving his fathers’ land. He went out blindly, not knowing where he was going, taking his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot. After time passed, he wasn’t seeing how the LORD was going to fulfill this

promise. He went out gung-ho into the wilderness, but now he was wandering aimlessly and not seeing the fruit of his labor. And worse, his wife was barren. What kind of nation was he going to create without any children. At the next opportunity, Abraham brought his concern to the LORD. We read in Genesis 15, verses 15:2-6: “But Abram said, “LORD GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!” And behold, the Word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”

{New slide} Now, Abraham certainly had faith in this inheritance God promised Him, and He had repeatedly obeyed the LORD on account of that faith, but the world had its way with him. Ten years had passed, and still Abraham had no children. I have to ask: How long has it been since Yeshua rose from the dead? It's been almost 2000 years. We might wonder analogously, when will God create a great nation for Himself like He promised? When will the firstborn return to raise up His people Israel? When will He bring peace to His Kingdom? Lest we think that God's kingdom and His peace can arise from the actions of men—out of our own strength, God provided us with the next part of the story. We read in Genesis 16:1-4, “Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, 'See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.” In verses 15-16, we read: “So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.” That's quite a bit of time to wait for a son, isn't it? He was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. But here's the thing, Ishmael was not the son God had promised him; he was not the son of Abraham's inheritance. And though he was Abraham's firstborn, he did not receive firstborn status, as you will see. Sarah, Abraham's wife, despised Hagar and her son. There's a lot of backstory I'm not getting into, but there was a whole lot of strife that developed from Abraham's decision here, and based on God's order of things, this was all Abraham's fault. Just like Adam was responsible to stop Eve from eating of the tree

of knowledge of good and evil, so too was Abraham responsible to refrain from acting on Sarah's bad idea. But instead of listen to God and wait on His promise, Abraham took his wife's advice and sought to fulfill the LORD's promise on his own. It did not go well. It went horribly. Ultimately, Sarah would demand that Abraham cast out Hagar and her son, Abraham's biological firstborn son.

{New slide} It would be another 13 years before God would fulfill His promise to Abraham and bring the promised son Isaac. Even though Abraham had taken matters into his own hands and even though he fathered a son with Sarah's maidservant, God was not slack concerning His promise. He returned to Abraham and renewed His promise, saying in Genesis 18:10-11: "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing." She hadn't only passed the age of childbearing, but she was around 90 years old. This wasn't going to be the inheritance Abraham expected. God made Him wait for it. Are you feeling David's heart in Psalm 130:5, where we read: "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His Word I do hope." While Abraham fell short by following his own heart earlier in life, he was ultimately rewarded for trusting in the Word of the LORD and learning to live with the consequences of his sins. We read in Genesis 21:1-5: "And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him." Sarah was about 90 years old at this time; she was past the age of childbearing. Isaac was not what we'd call a typical birth. His conception was a miracle of God. Does this account sound familiar? It should. Now, Isaac was not the Messiah. He was not conceived of the Holy Spirit. However, His birth was miraculous nonetheless, and it is certainly meant to point forward toward Messiah Yeshua and His miraculous virgin birth. As the account continues, you'll find that this was not the only similarity between Isaac and the life of our LORD.

{New slide} Some years had passed, and the LORD came again to Abraham and tested Abraham, saying: "'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, '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 on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'" And now you know the second reason why I've brought you to this story. Was Isaac

Abraham's only son? He was not. Ishmael was at least 13 years older than Isaac. But Isaac was the son of promise, the miraculous son of his wife Sarah, and now God was asking him to sacrifice this promised son after he waited all this time for him? Was God going to provide another son, or was He going to provide another way? Abraham showed a faith in this case that we honestly ought to admire. God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham to give him a son through his wife Sarah, and now He was asking Abraham to sacrifice him. Abraham knew God's promise was certain at this point, and this is why he went through with the LORD's request. He brought Isaac, willingly, to Mt. Moriah. He was about to carry through the command of God when we read in Genesis 22:15-18: "Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'" Indeed, Abraham was blessed. Isaac became the father of Jacob, and God renamed Jacob Israel, and from this nation would come Yeshua, the promised One who would save us all from our sin and give us the opportunity to share in His inheritance—the inheritance of our firstborn God. Isaac was not Abraham's only son, but God called Him this because Isaac would be the only son to receive the promised inheritance from many years prior. Through all of his children, Abraham indeed would become the father of many nations, but the nation that would come through Isaac would ultimately fulfill the promise of blessing that God offered to all of His children. Yeshua is the promised Seed of Abraham who came through Isaac and Jacob. By Him all the nations indeed are blessed.

{New slide} There are a few other things to show you about this account. First, in Hebrews 11:17-19, the Apostolic writer explained the reason for the grace God gave to Abraham, and this also sets up a model for us to follow. We read: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense." You see, Isaac was meant to point forward to Yeshua, God's One and Only Son, who would die as a sacrifice for all people who trust in Him, but then rise up as God's firstborn from the dead to inherit the promised eternal kingdom, which even Abraham saw back in His time. By being willing to sacrifice Isaac through trust in God's Word, Abraham demonstrated His faith in God to fulfill His promises no matter what happens in this life. We ought to relate to this faith, for

Yeshua said, according to Matthew 16:24-25, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” Abraham, having fully believed the promises of God at the expense of what he held most dear, understood the Kingdom of God that Yeshua would bring. He was willing to wait for it not just during his life, but also during the life of all his children and beyond. In Hebrews 11:8-10, the writer of Hebrews explained Abraham’s faith in God’s Kingdom like this: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Can you see how Abraham saw Yeshua’s day and rejoiced? Indeed, after waiting until he was 100 years old to receive the promise of his son, and after trusting God to the extent that he was willing to give up his son that he had waited so long for, knowing that God would honor His promises, Abraham was willing to do anything that God asked and wait as long as necessary to receive the true inheritance of God’s kingdom, which is eternal life with the King.

{New slide} Abraham’s experience, and Isaac and Jacob’s after him, showed demonstrable faith in Yeshua that was followed up with the works to prove it. This is the model we must follow. In James 2:21-24, the Apostle asked: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” Indeed, the inheritance promised to Abraham through his trust in God is actually the same inheritance offered to you and me through our faith in Yeshua, God’s only begotten Son. Yeshua is the firstborn, and we are all brethren if we look upon His example and follow Him until He comes. We may have to wait—a really long time—to witness the fruit of God’s promises, but when they finally come we will be blessed beyond our imagination, just as Abraham was. Abraham’s demonstrable faith is an example for us in this way, as Yeshua explained in John 8:39. He said: “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.” Now Abraham fathered Ishmael first through Hagar, then Isaac miraculously through Sarah, and after Sarah died, he had six other sons and daughters through his concubine Keturah (Genesis 25:1-4), but in all of this he gave Isaac firstborn status because Isaac represents the promises of Almighty God. In

Genesis 25:5-6, we read: “And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.” Isaac, as a prophetic type for Yeshua, received firstborn status. He was Abraham’s only begotten son, even though Abraham fathered several sons and daughters. He received the inheritance promised to Abraham, and then continued to pass that demonstrable faith down through his generations until Yeshua ultimately came forth from the Holy Spirit of God through the virgin Mary, and through His death and resurrection, inherited the eternal portion of God.

{New slide} I’m going to give you a few other similar examples, but these will be rapid fire. If you don’t know the stories, it’s time to pick up the Bible and start reading. These references should become second nature to you. Many years later, God gave Isaac the same promised inheritance as his father, he married Rebecca and she also struggled to give birth. After some time, she gave birth to Esau and Jacob, twins who fought each other in the womb, and Esau came out first. When they were grown, Esau came in from the field hungry for the lentil soup Jacob was making and agreed to sell his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of it. In Genesis 25:29-34: “Esau said to Jacob, “Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.” Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright as of this day.” And Esau said, “Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?” Then Jacob said, “Swear to me as of this day.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.” This birthright wasn’t just a right to an earthly inheritance, but a heavenly one. Esau, even though he was the firstborn, craved the things of this world and didn’t give a second thought to heavenly matters. Thus he was willing to trade his inheritance for a little temporary pleasure. God forbid any of us do the same. Now, when Isaac was old and about to die, He blessed Jacob in line with the inheritance He had purchased earlier, which we read in Genesis 28:3-4: ““May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”” We have to be willing to seek the inheritance of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, which is the Kingdom of God, no matter what it costs us. In Jacob’s case, he had to run from his furious brother who wanted to kill him for 20 years, and even after he returned from exile his brother tried to overtake him. He gave up his life in the land promised to Abraham in order to gain a life of service, and while he was able to return to the land

and dwell there, he died in Egypt outside the land. A promise also awaits Jacob for another day.

{New slide} Before he died, Jacob blessed all of his sons, giving firstborn status to Joseph, even though he was Jacob's second youngest child of 12 sons. In practical terms, Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and both would become tribes that would inherit portions of the Promised Land, further strengthening a pattern that firstborn does not mean the one to open the womb. Reuben was his oldest son, but Reuben defiled his father's bed by sleeping with Jacob's concubine. Simeon was second and Levi third, but they also defiled themselves by taking vengeance into their own hands. Judah was Jacob's fourth child, and ultimately his sons would receive the blessed status of the family leading to King David and ultimately Yeshua, but this would not happen immediately. God explained in 1st Chronicles 5, verses 1-2: "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's—" When blessing Joseph, Jacob explained in Genesis 49:26, "The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers." Joseph, the suffering servant, became an archetype for the first coming of Messiah Yeshua. Though he was sold into slavery and spent many years in a dungeon, he rose to be equal to the highest authority in Egypt and provided for His family that betrayed Him as well as all of the nations. In blessing Judah, Jacob said in Genesis 49:8, "Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you." King David would ultimately descend from Judah, and Yeshua from him, but even before the fullness of time revealed this inheritance, the tribe of Judah would incorporate a remnant from among all the tribes of Israel. When Jeroboam took the throne over the northern 10 tribes of Israel and led them astray into idolatry, faithful men from every tribe, "such as set their heart to seek the LORD God of Israel," resettled in Jerusalem so they could continue to worship the LORD, according to 2nd Chronicles 11:13-17. In 2nd Chronicles 15:9, we read that men from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon came over to David in great numbers when they saw the LORD his God was with him. So a remnant from various tribes of Israel became part of Judah, who had ultimately received the promise of God. The message over and over again in Scripture is straightforward: While firstborn status is meant for the son who is literally born first, it was often given to the man who sought redemption

from God. Clearly, this points to Yeshua, who redeemed all who would follow Him by His blood.

{New slide} Now, there are many other references to firstborn status in the Tanakh that ought to be briefly mentioned. In Exodus 13:2, after striking down all the firstborn of Egypt, making it clear that the inheritance of the world would be death, God redeemed the firstborn of Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb, again pointing forward to Yeshua. We read: "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine." Later, the LORD called for the Levites to take over the priesthood during the Old Covenant period. The LORD explained in Numbers 3:12-13, "'Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the LORD.'" So during this whole time, both the Levites and the firstborn would belong to the LORD. Yeshua would ultimately change this order. He would become a priest after the Order of Melchizedek, replacing the Levitical order. In His birth, Mary and Joseph brought Him to the LORD, as we read in Luke 2:22-23: "Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought [Yeshua] to Jerusalem to present Him to the LORD (as it is written in the law of the LORD, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD')." But it was not in His birth that Yeshua would be the firstborn of God. It was in His death and resurrection that He would redeem all people to God by His blood.

{New slide} We read in Hebrews 5:5-10, "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. As He also says in another place: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,' who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest 'according to the order of Melchizedek,'" As the author of salvation, Yeshua inherited the Kingdom of God that would result from it. And the Father indeed glorified Yeshua, just as He prayed for in John 17. The Father gave Yeshua the same glory that He had before creation, when He was with God, and when He was God. He is God, because Messiah Yeshua is the same yesterday, today and forever. The conclusion for

us is simple, which the writer of Hebrews explains in Hebrews 10:19-22, where we read: "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...." In faith, brothers and sisters, we can follow Yeshua into His Kingdom, knowing that He intercedes for us on the throne of grace. He has inherited eternal life, the eternal Kingdom, and the eternal throne, and He has invited you and me to join Him in this inheritance. He is the firstborn of many brethren. Brothers and sisters, I pray we are among them. Shabbat shalom.