

“The Sacrifice of the Son” Genesis 22

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Genesis 22: 1-2 *Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham! And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.*

CONTINUE READING THE STORY THROUGH VERSE 18

Our consideration today will be on two fronts: **THE TEST** and **THE TYPE**

THE TEST

What stands out initially in this passage is that God tested Abraham. We are told this upfront, probably so we will not be shocked by the horror of what God asks of Abraham. It is a test. God is not one who demands human sacrifice. And yet here He asks for what is totally contradictory to what we know of God. And we come face to face with the truth that God tests His own, and will therefore test you if you are His child by faith.

We know that God does not “tempt” anyone to sin. “Tempted” is the rendering in the Authorized Version, but it is better translated “tested,” for as James wrote in James 2:13, God does not tempt anyone. But God does test those who are His own, to conform them to the image of Jesus.

And it was “after these things” that God tested Abraham. What does this mean? Abraham had passed many previous tests of God, such as the call to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldeans and settle in Canaan (Gen. 11,12); and such as the test to believe the promise that he and his wife Sarah would have a child from their own bodies at an advanced age (Gen. 15). Abraham had passed these and other tests with “flying colors” of faith.

Genesis 15:6 *Then [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.*

Sadly, that is not to say that Abraham had been faithful in all his ways, however. Most significantly he had come to believe that God must have wanted to give him a son from his loins, but not from the womb of his aged wife, Sarah, so he had had relations with her handmaid, Hagar, and she had born him a son, Ishmael. But Ishmael was not God’s promise.

God’s tests are like the tests we received in school, moving us on to greater and higher knowledge and understanding. When we pass a test, or fail in a test, God creates yet another test to move us forward in our Christ-likeness. For Abraham, he as the Father of the nation of Israel and as the Father of our faith required one final PhD type test of faith “after these things.” And as we shall see, it was the ultimate test of love – and became the lived-out type of what God the Father would do in sacrificing His only Son, Jesus, for the world.

I submit that Abraham’s test included three key elements:

1. THE TEST OF FEAR We see this in verse 12, when after going through all the preparations to sacrifice Isaac, including raising the knife over his bound body, God halts his action and says:

Genesis 22:12 *“For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”*

Do we sufficiently and completely fear God as we should? I dare say, not. And therefore, God might very well test us, as he did Abraham, to better fear God as the Almighty and Sovereign of our life. Solomon taught us in his Proverbs that *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom.”* (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). And so, God will take us back to that lesson #1 often, to reinforce its foundational importance.

Oh, if we truly feared God as we ought, would we ever sin by rebellious commission or by omission of what we know to be right? We tread on dangerous territory when we do so. And we must not count on the love and grace of God to overlook our fault, for God is also a God of absolute justice, who will not let any sin go unanswered.

Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*

Oh, how we need those tests of FEAR, that we might learn to fear the Lord as we ought.

2. THE TEST OF FAITH We see this in verse 18, where God gives the blessing for Abraham’s obedience.

Genesis 22:18 *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*

Abraham’s actions of complete obedience showed the faith in His heart to trust God completely. As James taught,

James 2:17-18 *Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

It is not the works of obedience that *earn* our faith, but they *verify* our faith. Abraham passed this test of faith “with flying colors” because his faith was verified by action. He could have said to God, “yes God, I am willing to sacrifice my son, Isaac – but of course I know you wouldn’t ask that of me.” And there would have been no verifying of his willingness to follow through.

How often do we say that we will do something for God and then don’t do it? Does God count our willingness by words as faith? I think not. So it is fair to say that our faith will be tested on many occasions by our follow-through of action. And by these tests our faith will grow stronger.

The writer of Hebrews gives us a New Testament, Spirit-inspired look into the faith-mind of Abraham when he writes:

Hebrews 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

This is prophetic faith! Abraham was so convinced that God would not allow his Son to die that he believed by faith that God could and would raise up from the dead. That is why Abraham told his waiting servants, *“we will worship and return to you.”* (Gen. 22:5)

3. THE TEST OF LOVE We see this in verse 16.

Genesis 22:16 *By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son.*

God wants us to fear Him as Sovereign Lord. And He wants us to trust Him completely by faith. But most important of all, He wants us to love Him as Heavenly Father. He has never wanted a relationship with His children of simply fearful faith. He has always wanted a relationship of mutual love. “For God so *loved* the world that He gave.” And the #1 desire of God’s heart for you is that you *would “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”* (Matthew 22:37).

And since this is God’s greatest desire for us, do you not think that he would test this love, that it might be verified and grown? Of course. And how might God test our love? With simply words of deep affection? No – He will test them by our willingness to give up that which is most precious to us to show our love for Him supremely. That is what He did for Abraham, and that is what He will do for you and for me.

THE TYPE

OK – our sermon series is “Jesus B.C.” in which we want to show you clear indications of Jesus in the Old Testament Jewish Scriptures. So far, I have given you a message on the 3-fold test of Abraham, and hinted at the relationship with Jesus. But let’s conclude with what I hope you will see as a clear indication of Jesus in this Genesis 22 account.

Is it not obvious that Abraham in the story is the type of God our Father, willing to sacrifice his only son (now that Ishmael had been banished)? And is not obvious that Isaac in the story is the type of Jesus the Son, who was willing to be sacrificed by obeying his Father. Surely Isaac could have escaped and even subdued his father had he wanted to. That Isaac is called “lad” is indicative that he was probably a teenager at the time - old enough to bear the weight of the burnt offering wood on his shoulders, and surely old enough to subdue his 100+ year old father. Isaac, like Jesus, was willing.

But let’s look at other elements of the story that so beautifully coincide with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

- **MORIAH** (22:2) The mountain range of Moriah is identified by scholars as being in what we now know as Jerusalem, the peak of which was on the temple mount where the temple was built. Calvary, or Golgotha, was on the same mountain range of Moriah. So, Abraham offered Isaac on the very mountain on which Jesus was crucified, offered by God as a burnt offering for our sin (as we learned in our lesson last week) Amazing!
- **THIRD DAY** (22:4) It is made clear that it was on the third day that Abraham saw the mountain of the sacrifice and proceeded to walk to that place and proceed to offer up Isaac. It is therefore “on the third day” that Isaac was symbolically brought back from the dead, or resurrected – just as Jesus was raised on the third day. Amazing!
- **BEARING THE WOOD** (22:6) Jesus was made to bear His own cross just as Isaac was made to bear the wood of the burnt offering on his back, carrying it up the hill to the place of sacrifice. Amazing!
- **LOVE RELATIONSHIP** (22:7) The exchange, Isaac: “My father” and Abraham: “Here I am, my son” shows a loving bond between the father and son. Abraham trusted Isaac would obey, and Isaac trusted that his father was doing the right thing. This so mirrors the loving and trusting relationship of the Heavenly Father and Jesus His Son. Amazing!
- **THE LAMB** (22:8) In telling Isaac that “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering,” Abraham was prophesying the provision that Jesus, the Lamb of God, would be on Calvary. And remember that it was a ram, not a lamb that was actually provided, so Abraham’s words of a provided lamb is even more prophetically pointing to the Lamb that the Father provided on Calvary. Amazing!

- **THE KNIFE BEARER** (22:9-10) Our Genesis story makes it clear that Abraham was to be the executioner of Isaac, right down to the slaying by the knife. It is often asked “who really killed Jesus?” with the answers given ranging from Herod, to the Jews, to all men, to Satan. But “God so loved that He gave” (John 3:16) and subsequent NT Scriptures indicate that the Father took the life of His son, Jesus giving it willingly. It was a voluntary death on the part of the Father and Son. Amazing!
- **JEHOVAH JIRAH** (22:14) Abraham named the place “The Lord will provide – literally in Hebrew, Jehovah Jirah, for that day God had miraculously provided for the burnt offering that would spare Isaac. Some 2000 years later on that same mountain range, our Heavenly Father because the miraculous provider, providing His own Son as the Lamb of God that would spare all those of the human race would trust Him for that provision. God is indeed our “Jehovah-Jirah” – our great Provider. Amazing!
- **THE SEED** (22:18) God told Abraham that in His seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. And in the purely genetic sense of that promise, God has blessed all nations with the fruit of Abraham’s loins through Isaac – namely the nation of Israel. But the apostle Paul gives us the full meaning of that promise.

Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.

Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, teaches that the promise made to Abraham so long ago was that through His loins would come the “seed” – the Messiah, Jesus – who would bless all the nations of the earth. The very promise of the Genesis 22 story is about Jesus. Jesus B.C.! Amazing!

Have you once again seen Jesus, B.C.? I trust so.

And I trust also that you have learned the critical importance of God’s tests of your FEAR, FAITH and LOVE. He will test you through various trials and circumstances with the end goal of conforming you to the image of His Beloved Son. And may you, like Abraham, pass those tests with “flying colors.”

Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.

Amazing!