

Text: Genesis 22:1-24

Title: The Offering of Isaac

Truth: God's test of Abraham demonstrated God's rich provision.

Date/Location: Sunday February 5, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

I titled this message "The Offering of Isaac." You might think you are a step ahead of me by saying it was the "near" offering of Isaac because Isaac was not actually killed as an offering. True—but I already thought of that! My title refers to the command of God and the corresponding mindset of Abraham, which was such that his son was ordered to offered; it was decided; he was obeying God. He was fully expecting that God would raise Isaac back up from the dead after the sacrifice was completed (Heb. 11:19). How could he be so sure of this? God gave Isaac in the first place when it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have children. What God had given He could give again if He so choose. Furthermore, God had promised numerous times that the Abrahamic covenant was going to pass through Isaac. Since that had not yet been completed, it would without question do so at some point in the future. James 2:21 adds that Abraham's faith was proven real when he "offered (not almost offered) Isaac his son on the altar."

I. A Test, 22:1-14

- A. The KJV translates 22:1 as God "tempted" Abraham. That is incorrect. The verb means to put someone to the test. The correct translation therefore is "tested." There is another reason besides the dictionary meaning of the verb: God does not tempt anyone with evil (James 1:13). God was doing this to prove the genuineness of Abraham's faith.
- B. When God called, Abraham answered right away to listen, and obeyed right away to carry out God's command. I know this is a narrative passage, so it is reporting what *did* happen, but it is also a model for what *should* happen when God's word comes to us.
- C. God commands Abraham to take Isaac and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah (the eventual site of the temple – 2 Sam. 24:18, 1 Chron.

21:18, 2 Chron. 3:1). Abraham rose early the next morning to obey God's command. It took three days journey to get there.

- D. Then we see the great faith of Abraham in that he said, "the lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you...God will provide for Himself the lamb." It does not say so specifically here, but we know from the NT that Abraham believed God's promise about Isaac so much that he thought that even if he did sacrifice Isaac, that God would raise him again from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19).
- E. At the last second, God stops Abraham from killing his only son, and commends him because he fears God. It was the "Angel of the Lord" who spoke to Abraham from heaven.
- F. At that point Abraham noticed a ram caught nearby in a thicket and offered it "instead of" his son. The word "anti" is used in the Greek translation of Genesis. The word means something is replaced by something else. In Mark 10:45 the Bible says that the Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom "anti" many—for or instead of.

In this word and event is a foreshadowing of the substitutionary atonement provided by Jesus Christ. Like the ram taking the place of Isaac, Jesus Christ took the place of sinners. I say with full confidence that Jesus Christ took my place, and your place, and the place of anyone who will turn to Him for rescue. You know yourself. You know that God has said you have fallen short of his standard of proper behavior and thought, and that the wages of such behavior and thought is death. If you do not know Christ, you have a kind of foreboding thought about the end of life: "What's next?" For Christians, what's next is the loving embrace of Jesus into eternal heavenly life.

Abraham called God by the name "The LORD will provide" (Jehovah Jireh). Compare to Gen. 16:13 when Hagar gave a special name to God because of her experience. The name stuck, and mount Moriah came to be known as the place where on the mount of the Lord it shall be provided. Be clear: while this does speak of a characteristic of God in general, it is specifically about God providing a substitute. It is about God providing salvation, not giving us material things. God had already graciously provided

Abraham with material blessing. This was an *additional critical provision*, and it is one that we all need.

G. Think of three related issues here.

1. What God commanded here is a test. It was a real test. But the test was not carried out—so says the Bible! God did not in the end approve or allow a human offering.
2. Have you ever thought about the Jewish/Christian faith and its relationship to human sacrifice? Such was practiced in many ancient cultures, with children and adults, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The fact is that human sacrifice is *not* approved in Scripture. That is, it is not a thing that God permitted. When it was reported in the Bible, it was always an abomination (Lev. 18:21, 2 Kings 23:10, Jer. 32:35). It could not take away sin; it most definitely did not appease God’s anger—much the opposite! It was, as far as we know, done to unwilling participants.
3. What other humans were killed in a sacrificial way—and with God’s approval? There is only one that I know of, and this passage foreshadows it. A very special One gave His life as an offering for sin. He rendered “Himself as a guilt offering,” Isaiah 53:10 prophesies. How can we reconcile Christ’s death with God’s hatred of human sacrifice? First, Messiah was a *volunteer*. Second, He was not a mere man, but the God-man who could both die and be a perfect sacrifice at the same time, which no mere man could do.

II. Re-Confirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant, 22:15-19

A. The Abrahamic covenant is re-confirmed (22:15-19).

B. Remember, the promise was given and confirmed four other times already in Genesis. The first was in chapter 12, then 13, then 15, 17, and now 22. At the first, Abram was 75 years old (12:4); then perhaps 80; then about 85 (16:3); then 99 (17:1, 17:17, 21:5); now maybe as old as 120. Isaac was probably a young man by now, for in chapter 23 Sarah died at 127, and since she was 10 years younger than Abraham [16:17], this means that Isaac was 37 years old at the death of his mother.

- C. In any case, over a period of about 40 years God repeated the covenant to Abraham at least five times.
- D. Abraham's faith had grown greatly from his initial laughter about having a son to the point in which he was resolved to offer his son back to God in a sacrificial ritual. He was convinced that God would fix the situation. This convinced state of mind came from genuine and strong faith in God.

III. Nahor's Family Line, 22:20-24

- A. The final five verses are a record of the family of Nahor. This man was a brother of Abraham, as was Haran (father of Lot) who predeceased them. Nahor married Milcah, a niece. See our prior message at Genesis 11:27-12:20 which had a section that referred to close-relative marriages.
- B. Abraham learned that Nahor and Milcah had been blessed with children. News did not flow as quickly as it does today! The children were Huz, Buz, Kemuel (father of Aram), Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel, eight in all. He had four other children by a concubine Reumah, and these were Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah. These people do not figure prominently in the overall Biblical narrative.
- C. The significant thing here is that one of Bethuel's granddaughters was Rebekah, who would eventually become the wife of Isaac (see chapter 24). They were first cousins, once removed, I believe.
- D. What is the importance of this information? It shows that family connections were quite important even though the distance between parts of the family was multiple hundreds of miles and the time between seeing each other was decades. They cared to know about the other branches of their family. They recorded genealogical information.

Conclusion

In all this, Abraham's conduct confirmed his righteousness before God. That righteous standing was **obtained by faith** earlier in his life but was now **demonstrated by works**. True faith saves; true faith then works.

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