

THE GREATEST TEST | GENESIS 22 | PASTOR MARK BOFILL | 09/24/2023

I. Abraham's Ultimate Test (1-14) | II. Angel's Unforgettable Tribute (15-19) | III. Abraham's Ur Ties (20-24)

INTRO: Up to this point, Abraham's journey has revealed seven life tests which required **Character building** and **Trust in God**. They include...

- **The Family Test (11:27-12:5)** – Leaving his land and his loved ones, he stepped out in faith!
- **The Famine Test (12:10-13:4)** – Abraham failed to trust God as he went down to Egypt for help.
- **The Fellowship Test (13:5-18)** – Which he passed... by letting Lot choose his land.
- **The Fight Test (14:1-16)** – He depended on God and miraculously defeated the kings of the east.
- **The Fortune Test (14:17-24)** – He passed because he denied the worldly wealth of Sodom.
- **The Fatherhood Test (16)** – Which he and Sarai drastically failed, relying upon his flesh for a son!
- **The Farewell Test (21:14-21)** – He obeyed the Lord by sending Ishmael away.

One would think that these tests would suffice to prove him a man of God. Ahh, but God's ways are very different than our ways! **The Greatest Test** for Abraham would involve **the Greatest Sacrifice** from Abraham, which would determine **the Greatest Love of God!**

I. ABRAHAM'S ULTIMATE TEST (1-14) – After the Birth and Dedication of Isaac, after the sending away of Ishmael, all was well for many years. Isaac had grown to be **30-33 years old** at this point and Abraham was truly blessed of the Lord

A. The Request (1-2) – God calls Abraham once again...but notice his response, *"Here I am."* Though time had passed, Abraham was still attentive and available to God's voice!

1. **Surprising Commands (2)** – *Take your son to the land of Moriah and [sacrifice] him...What!* Why would God request such a thing? (v.1) tells us that God tested Abraham, but didn't he already have faith? Yes, but this was not so much a test to produce faith, as it was a test to reveal faith!

2. **Specific Commands**, take Your only son Isaac, whom you love! This command must have felt like a sharp dagger in his heart. – Isaac... laughter! (fig. sacrifice my laughter, my joy!) – God mentions his "only son" three times in (vv. 2, 12,16), but specifically emphasizes *"whom you love!" Wow!* – This is the first mention of LOVE in the Bible and the context is the love of a Father for his Son.

- **Figuratively**, this illustrates the relationship between God the Father and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and their love one for another. – In (John 14:31), Jesus told us **He obeys His Father's commands** so *"...that the world [should] know that He loves the father."*
- **Interestingly enough**, in the NT the 1st occurrence of love is in (Matt 3:17), when the voice came from the Father, which said, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* – Furthermore, the 1st mention of love in the Gospels of Mark and Luke include the same truth (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).
- **There's more!** If we look at the 1st mention of love in John's Gospel, guess the scripture reference? (John 3:16) *For God so loved the world that He Gave His only begotten Son...*

P/A: If Abraham loves his son so much, how much greater is God's love for his Son. And that **same love is freely offered to both you and I!** – **How Deep the Father's Love for us!**

B. The Response (3-5) – Abraham OBEYED, without any reluctance or resistance, without drudgery or even delay, we are told that Abraham **“Rose Early”** to gather supplies, make travel preparations, and GO! – **That’s it!** Abraham’s diligence revealed his faith in God! **But now we see how Abraham’s Ultimate Test played out in his mind...**

1. **His Work (3)** – Notice that he did not delegate the work, **it was something that he had to do!** – **With almost a nervous energy**, Abraham *saddled his own donkey* and *split the very wood* that His own son would eventually burn on! (*cf. Prov. 16:3*)

2. **His Journey (4)** was a three-day trip from Beersheba to Moriah, about 45 miles. – *What went through Abraham’s mind during that 3-day journey was torturous indeed!* – He already learned many faith lessons and knew to trust God no matter the circumstance. But the detail of his awareness is later spoken of in the NT. (**Heb 11:17-19 - NLT**) *It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God’s promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac,¹⁸ even though God had told him, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.”¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.*

3. **His Faith in God (5)** – Even **WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING** what God was doing through the testing! – **So confident**, that he informed his two servants that **they would return after worshipping**. *“Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship (i.e., Bow Down - shachah), and WE WILL COME BACK TO YOU!”* **WOW... this means that Abraham had no intention of bringing back Isaac’s ashes!**

C. The Requirements (6-8) – Here we read of the **essential elements for a burnt offering**. It began with laying the wood on Isaac’s back. Isaac was to **carry to burden uphill**. – If Isaac is a **type of Jesus Christ**, then the **WOOD is the BURDEN of our sin** that Jesus himself bore. (**1 Pet 2:24**) says, *“...who Himself bore our sin His own body on the tree...”* – As **Abraham is a type of God the Father**, (**Isa 53:6**) tells us that *“The Lord had laid on Him [Jesus], the iniquity of us all.”*

1. **It was Abraham’s burden to bring the FIRE and the KNIFE**, which speaks of the **Judgment of God**. As Abraham bore carried his elements; I love what **Spurgeon** commented on this: *“That knife was cutting into his own heart all the while, yet he took it. Unbelief would have left the knife at home, but genuine faith takes it.”*

2. **I want to tell you plainly church, that because God’s Love us...he will test us!** And we always question the **“WHY?”** But like Abraham, it is to reveal a genuine faith, which **glorifies God** and **matures us!** (**1 Pet 1:7-8**) *“That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,⁸ whom having not seen you love...”* Your Greatest Test will reveal Your Greatest Love! Do you love Jesus Christ? Or do you love some other thing more? Prove it! – **Remember... “Faith without works is dead!”** (**Jam 2:20**)

3. **ISAAC (7-8) was the key component for the burnt offering!** As they journeyed, **ISAAC QUESTIONED** his father of the seemingly absent sacrificial lamb. The **grammatical exclamation** indicates Isaac’s realization of the fact! **“My Father!”**

a. At this point **Abraham KNEW that his son understood the reality of the situation**, so he replied... **“Here I am son.”** – He knew that his grown son would **eventually ask the question...** **“Where is the lamb for burnt offering?”** A question that **Abraham was already prepared to answer** by faith, i.e., **“My son, God will provide for Himself THE LAMB...”**

b. **Isaac offered himself Knowingly and Willingly (8b)** – Abraham did not have to force him to be the sacrifice, because **Isaac himself grew up hearing of El-Shaddai, *the God of the impossible!*** – Isaac’s faith and obedience was now being tested just as much as Abraham’s. – The phrase **“the two of them went together” (v. 6,8)** is **repeated twice for emphasis**, which literally means **the two of them went in agreement!**

- **Re: Isaac’s Question:** **“Where is the lamb for burnt offering?”** speaks of the proper sacrifice to appease God’s righteous requirement! – **Isaac actions typify Jesus Christ**, who willingly offered Himself in submission to His Father’s will. (**2 Cor 5:21; Heb 10:11 nasb**), tells us that, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, **once for all time!**
- **Re: Abraham’s Answer:** **“My son, God will provide for Himself THE LAMB...”** **Circumstantially**, he believed that God would provide the way resurrect his only son, **Isaac. Prophetically**, all the faithful seed have asked the same question, from **Isaac to Moses to David to Isaiah**, looking for the answer...all the way up to the time of **John the Baptist**, who identified the Messiah in (**John 1:29,36**) **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”**

D. The Readiness (9-10) – Here we read of Commitment! They were both on **Mt. Moriah** together as Abraham built an Altar and meticulously arranged the wood! – I can imagine **the scene as Abraham bound his son**, both probably weeping vehemently for one another. Both of them **offering their best to their God**, as Isaac was placed on the wood (9).

- **Abraham LOVED his son, but he also loved his God! (10)** – Abraham was entirely willing to thrust the knife into Isaac because he believed in God's capacity to bring Isaac back from the dead! – Imagine his emotions as as he began to reach for the knife?
- **Now think about how God our Father felt when He led His only begotten Son to the cross!**

E. The Recognition (11-12) – Abraham’s **act of stretching for the knife (11)** was divinely observed, which triggered a divine response from the Angel of the Lord. **In a figurative sense, it actually pierced God’s heart...**so the Angel immediately called Abraham’s name twice.

1. **The Angel’s tells Abraham to Stop! (12). HE PASSED THE GREATEST TEST!** The Angel, saw that Abraham Feared God more than keeping his son alive! – **Fearing God** is equal to reverencing God or Loving God above anything else! – **Jesus later reveals that this was the Greatest Commandment (Matt 22:37-40)!** A law of love, which is anti-Idolatrous!

2. **God is the only God who deserves our worship, there is none like our God!** God does not want human sacrifices; **He wants our hearts... He wants us to believe in God’s promises!**

P/A – Abraham was willing to die to self, which reveals that His Faith was genuine! **If we say that we believe in God, then we too should be ready to willing to obey God in everything!**

F. The Replacement (13-14) – As soon as *“Abraham looked up”* a substitutionary Ram appeared! **God provided a RAM in place of the lamb** because God’s will was followed. – **Abraham did not have to chase a flock...**he only needed one sacrificial animal...so God provided it, and **he offered it up** to God. Notice though...**INSTEAD OF HIS SON!** – This teaches us that, *“When God’s work is done in God’s way, it will not lack God’s support.”* – Wiersbe

- **Abraham’s Acknowledges the Place (14)** – Mt. Moriah would become a very special place for Abraham, Isaac, and eventually for all his seed. **So, he prophetically named it: The-Lord-Will-Provide**, i.e., **Jehovah-Jireh**. Mt. Moriah is especially significant because 2,000 years later, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God would be offered as a sacrifice for the sin of the world! (Additional names are *Golgotha, the place of the Skull, and of course CALVARY!*)

P/A – A RAM was offered instead of Isaac. **But Jesus HAD TO DIE on the cross** because there was **no sufficient substitute to take his place**. Jesus was the Replacement...He was the Lamb without blemish who paid the price for our sin and the sin of the world!

II. ANGEL’S UNFORGETTABLE TRIBUTE (15-19) – **It seems obvious that after such a hard test Abraham needed reaffirming of God’s promises.** So once again, **God the Son Himself**, the unique messenger, or Angel of the LORD, *called to Abraham a second time...*

A. Reiterating the Covenant Promises from before (15-16).

B. Because of Abraham obeyed whole-heartedly (17), the Angel swore blessings on Him and multiplying upon his posterity, comparable to the *“stars in the heavens and as the sand on the beach,”* which is almost incalculable!

C. In (v.18) we see that the promise of (Gen 12:2-3) restated, assuring blessing upon those nations who embrace Abraham’s lineage, i.e., **The Messiah** — the only son of God the Father — would fulfill this promise of blessing to all the nations of the earth. He is the Seed of (Gen 3:15)

D. Abraham Returned Home (19) – When Abraham comes off the mountain, he returned to the two servants, but nothing is said about Isaac! Isaac is not mentioned again until (Gen 24:62) when he meets Rebeka... His bride!

P/A – When Abraham gave his best to God, God rewarded him doubly!

III. ABRAHAM’S UR TIES (20-24) – i.e., **Extended Family Members**. When **Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans**, he also left his brother Nahor (Gen 11:27-29). Here we learn of the children born to Abraham’s brother, back in Ur. But the name to highlight here is **Rebeka (v.23)** because she would marry Isaac by faith, without having never seeing him!

Closing Thoughts on the Greatest Test of faith: Deeply woven into this test was also The test of Love, the test of Obedience, the test of Trust, and a test of Will! **How are you in surrendering all to God?** – Is there something in your life that you value so much, that you are NOT surrendering to the Lord?

- **Maybe your Greatest Test is about to come!**