

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!**