

Abraham Pt 5

Genesis 22

“Where is the Lamb”

Intro:

This is at least the 8th recorded encounter between Abraham and the Lord

- Gen 12:1 – The call to leave Ur and the outline of the promise
- Gen 12:7 – Upon arriving in Canaan he is promised that this would be his land
- Gen 13:14 – After Lot departs, The promise of land is reaffirmed and the promise of descendants as the sand of the sea is added
- Gen 15:1 – Promised to be Abe’s shield and reward and promised descendants from him to outnumber the stars
- Gen 17:1-2 – God reaffirms the covenant and adds the element of circumcision
- Gen 18:1 – God appeared to Abraham to give the time of the birth of Isaac and to reveal the destruction of Sodom
- Gen 21:12 – Affirm Sarah’s decision to cast out Hagar and Ishmael

Now we find The Lord speaking to Abraham yet again:

Genesis 22:1-2

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ² 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.”

No doubt that of all the times he heard God speak this would be the hardest one to obey as God instructs Abraham to offer his only son as a sacrifice

We are going to slow our pace through Genesis just a bit and camp here in chapter 22. In doing so we will see:

- The Purpose of this event
- A series of firsts in the story
- An illustration of the work of Christ

The Purpose:

Genesis 22:1-2

Now it came to pass after these things that **God tested Abraham,**

We will see that this passage is clearly a prophetic illustration of the cross, but since the cross-had not happened yet; the purpose behind this event as it relates to Abraham is something different

We are told that all this was done to test Abraham

Test – To put to the test, try or prove

Google definitions - a procedure intended to establish the quality, performance, or reliability of something, especially *before it is taken into widespread use.*

A trial

Tests are designed with a purpose in mind.

- In College my brother had a psychology class. The first test began with; “BE SURE TO READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULL” Then hidden within the instrutciosn the students were told to ignore all questions, write their name on the paper and turn it in for full credit
- I took a math course where the very first day we were given a test seeking to determine whether or not we should be in the class
- As the story unfolds we find exactly what it was that The Lord was proving within Abraham

Genesis 22:12

¹²And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

The purpose behind this event in Abraham’s life was to prove that he in fact **feared The Lord.**

This lesson is so important that God put Abraham to the ultimate test!

What does it mean to fear God?

Charles Swindal –

“What does it mean to fear God? Simple, It means to be afraid of Him”

While that is true and often forgotten, there is a lot more to it than that.

Simple working definition -

To fear God means to desire to please God above anything else

This is seen when we are willing to do what God wants at the sake of peer pressure, culture, political correctness or even our own desires.

The prayer of the one who fears God is “Thy will be done” or as Paul prayed, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

This is contrasted in Scripture with fearing man

Proverbs 29:25

**The fear of man brings a snare,
But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.**

Fearing man above fearing God ensnared many characters in Scriptures

- **Saul's** failure of keeping the best sheep rather than destroying all the spoils of war, a sin that cost him the kingdom was driven by a fear of man

1 Samuel 15:24

²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your

words, **because I feared the people**
and obeyed their voice.

- **Herod's** failure of putting to death John the Baptist, a man described by Jesus as the greatest man to have ever lived, was also driven by a fear of man

Matthew 14:9

⁹ And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and **because of those who sat with him**, he commanded *it* to be given to *her*

- **Pilate** committed the ultimate atrocity when he sent Jesus off to the cross. This too was motivated by a fear of man

Mark 15:15

¹⁵ So Pilate, **wanting to gratify the crowd**, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified.

- Sadly this same thing is true for each of us. We have all failed to please God because of pressure to be pleasing to someone else or even to gratify our own desires. We all need a healthy fear of God

Fearing God is particularly important for those who are in ministry

Exodus 18:21

²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, **such as fear God**, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

One can only imagine what the sailors thought when Jonah claimed to be a man who feared God.

A more detailed definition of fearing God –

Fearing God is the first step in wisdom

Proverbs 9:10

**“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**

Wisdom is defined as knowing what to do in constantly changing circumstances of life. A wise person makes good decisions regarding relationships, family, time and even finances.

Scripture declares that the first step in solving the wisdom rubric is to desire to do what God wants.

If we do not start there we will begin our journey already off course.

50 times the word wisdom is used in Proverbs, but a person will never get there if they do not start with the fear of God

Scripture declares that there is more than one kind of wisdom.

James 1:15

This **wisdom** does not descend **from above**, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

James 1:17

But the **wisdom** that is **from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Fearing God involves hating sin –

Proverbs 8:13

¹³The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate.

If I truly fear God, or desire to please God I will remove things from my life that are not pleasing to Him.

If I claim to hate something yet keep it close to me I have proven by my actions that I really do not hate it

The true evidence of fearing God is to set boundaries on your life that will keep you from getting involved in the things that He came to set you free from

Fearing God is the chief aim of life

Ecclesiastes 12:13

¹³Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man's all.

Solomon spent his whole life in pursuit of the purpose or meaning of life. Ecclesiastes is the record of that journey. After years of living for pleasure, possessions, position and the like, Solomon finally came to an understanding of what was most important in life:

Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man's all.

So a combination of these things leads us to see pleasing God above all else is the chief purpose of life and will lead to good decision-making and away from sin.

One more thought

Genesis 22 illustrates a true fear of the Lord when Abraham takes that which is most valuable to him and offers it to the Lord.

To fear God is to make certain that God gets first place in our lives.

Jesus made an interesting a no doubt highly controversial statement when He said:

Luke 14:26

²⁶ “If anyone comes to Me and does not **hate** his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

Obviously the one who declared that the greatest commandment is to love God and love others is not encouraging us to hate each other. Instead the love we have for God must be supreme above the love for anything else.

Jesus declared that it is impossible for us to have 2 masters because we will love on and despise the other.

A two-headed snake will not survive in the wild and a divided devotion will always lead us to sin.

For Abraham to continue on with the Lord it was essential that all things, even good things be under the Lord in his heart and devotion

A Series of Firsts:

There are a number of key Bible words that find their first use here in Genesis 22. It will be the backdrop of this story that all other uses of the words will be seen. To better understand these terms we need to see them in light of Abraham offering his son to God

1. Test

We have seen that the entire event was for the purpose of proving that Abe feared the Lord.

When we are being tested by the trials of life we must keep in mind that one of the main purposes is to create in us a fear of God

IT is highly likely that prior to this event Abraham may have placed Isaac above the Lord in importance and devotion

When we are going through the storms of life we often look to God for a reason or purpose, it is important to remember this story and understand part of the purpose is that we who love Him first and remove anything that is not pleasing to Him from our lives

2. Love

No doubt the word love is a key word in the Bible and in life.

- The greatest command is to love God
- The second is to love others
- Love is the proof of relationship with God
- Love is the basis of marriage and family relations
- Love is one of the ways the world will see Christ in us

It is here where we first see true love in action.

The word is used to describe the way Abe feels about his son Isaac.

But the story will go on to illustrate true love.

According to John we show love by obeying God

2 John 1:6

⁶This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

The greatest way Abe could show love to his son was to obey God.

The greatest way we can show love to our families is to obey God.

Sometimes we can do great harm to those we love by misunderstanding what God wants from us and placing unrealistic unbiblical standards upon them. Paul warned fathers of not provoking their children to wrath.

3. Worship

Again we come to a very important Bible word. The word worship expresses a vital part of any relationship with God.

Worship today is often defined as:

Singing

Expressing devotion through some sort of religious right or practice

The word translated worship in Genesis 22 means:

To bow down to in order to offer homage, honor or respect

But it is in the story itself that we see what true worship is

Abraham took what was of the highest value to him and offered it willingly to the Lord.

True worship is giving ourselves and what we possess to the Lord

This is demonstrated when we give our time, talents and treasures

Time and our checkbooks are often the most revealing barometers of what we truly worship the most

Finally this story is a Prophetic Portrait

We read of Jesus:

John 5:39

³⁹You search **the Scriptures**, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which **testify of Me**.

Hebrews 10:7

⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’”

Luke 24:27

²⁷And **beginning at Moses** and all the Prophets, He expounded to them **in all the Scriptures** the things **concerning Himself**.

According to the New Testament writers the entirety of the Bible is about and points to Jesus.

The story here in Genesis 22 is one of the highest mountain peaks in prophetically telling the story of the offering of God’s only Son as a sacrifice for Human sin

This story is referred to by the writer of Hebrews as pointing to the work of Christ

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” ¹⁹concluding that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Lets look at how this story points to and illustrates the cross

- Take now your son, your only son, whom you love

It becomes clear even to the most casual observer that this is a picture of God sending His Son

- Go to Moriah

Moriah is part of the hills of Judea, it is the highest peak and what was later referred to as Calvary, Golgotha or the place of the skull

- He bound Isaac and laid him on the altar

Isaac was no child at this point. At the least he was a teenager, perhaps even older.

This is seen by the use of the word lad in 22:5 which means you man

And by the fact that he was able to bear the weight of the wood as they marched up the hill

For Isaac to be offered there had to be both Abraham's giving and Isaac's willing surrender

Like Isaac, Jesus willingly gave himself for us even with the taunting of those who called for Him to come down from the cross

While at the same time in heaven we are told that it pleased the father to bruise His Son

- A prophetic declaration

On the way up the hill Isaac asked, "Where is the Lamb"

In response Abraham declared: "God will provide the lamb"

When God stopped Abraham from performing the sacrifice, He provided a Ram to be offered in place of His son

We are left to wonder, "Where is the Lamb?"

In addition to the firsts we have seen in this chapter, this is the first use of the word lamb. It is in the form of a question with the answer being that God will provide a lamb

The first use of the word lamb in the NT is found in John 1

John 1:29

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world

Jesus is the Sacrificial lamb that has been promised since Abraham and Isaac first walked up Calvary's hill.

It would be on this same hill, 2,000 years later that Christ would die in the place of all of us

Paul explained what happened when He took our place

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- A picture of the Resurrection

It is interesting that the New Testament points out that this is prophetic picture, but it emphasizes the resurrection above the cross.

¹⁹ concluding that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Figurative sense – is a translation of the word *para ballo* or *parable*. It means to throw alongside.

In other words the story of Abe and Isaac is thrown alongside the resurrection in order to illustrate it.

Notice it was a 3 day journey. From the time Abe heard he was to sacrifice his son, Isaac was as good as dead. 3 days later, God provided a symbolic resurrection

The resurrection is seen in at least 2 other OT passages

Jonah – Jesus referred to this

Matthew 12:40

⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Psalms – Peter in his first sermon referred to this

Psalm 16:10

¹⁰For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see
corruption.

One last thought

Man has always been attempting to establish relationship with God by his own accomplishments.

- This was seen in Adam's fig leaves
- In Cain's vegetable sacrifice
- But its highest attempt is in the pagan practice of human sacrifice which was common at the time of Abraham

With this once story God is making clear with the most elaborate backdrop that could have ever been painted that He will have no part in human sacrifice. His system will be based not upon our giving to Him but on His giving to us.