

The Lord Told Abraham to Offer His Son as a Sacrifice

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that Abraham and many other people in the Old Testament understood that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is eternal. In this topic, we will see that God tested Abraham to reveal his heart for all future generations.

In Genesis 22:1-2, we read, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ 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.” In these verses, we see that God gave Abraham a test so future generations could better understand the faith of Abraham. Testing and temptation can happen in the same situation. James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” God allows tests in the lives of His followers to show that they will stand strong in that test. At the same time, those who are depending on their own strength, will say they are being tempted to sin. James 1:13-15 uses the same root word when those verses say, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

These verses show that it was a test in the life of Abraham because he was obedient to God and did not depend on his own strength. Sometime after Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant, we see that God chose to test Abraham. First, God told Abraham to take his son, his only son, Isaac. God also called him “his only son” in verses 12 and 16. The word translated “only” is used two primary ways in the Old Testament. Seven times, it speaks of a beloved, only child; four times, it speaks of an only begotten child. One illustration of this second use is in Zechariah 12:10 where we read, “‘And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.’” This verse shows that in the future, Israel will grieve because they pierced Christ, the only begotten Son of God. The three uses by God, to Abraham, speak of an only beloved child.

Abraham was told to take his only beloved son and offer him as a burnt sacrifice in the land of Moriah on a mountain that God would show him. 2 Chronicles 3:1 says, “Now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where *the Lord* had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” Because of this verse, many believe that the place where Abraham was to offer Isaac as a sacrifice was the place where the Temple of Solomon was later built in the city of Jerusalem. These things taken together show that God was using Abraham to give a picture of the fact that He would send His Only Son to die and pay the penalty for our sin so we could receive forgiveness.

We go on to read about the obedience of Abraham. Genesis 22:3-5 says, “So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will

come back to you.” In these verses, we see that Abraham was obedient immediately. He got up early the next morning so he could carry out the instructions of God.

By this time, Isaac was at least twenty years old and may have been close to thirty years old. Abraham was getting advanced in age since he was one hundred years older than Isaac. It was about 45 miles to Mount Moriah, so the trip was going to take them two full days. Abraham saddled his donkey, split the wood, took Isaac and two of the young men who were servants, and started toward Mount Moriah. Sometime, early on the third day, Abraham could see the place in the distance. Then Abraham gave the two young men the following instructions, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”

These instructions sound very simple, but they teach us a great lesson about the faith of Abraham. That faith is shown in the phrase, “We will come back to you.” Hebrews 11:17-19 says, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” These verses show us the great faith that Abraham had in the resurrection. Abraham realized that when he offered Isaac as a sacrifice, God would raise him back from the dead so the two of them would be able to return together to the two servants. God had promised Abraham that his descendants, particularly the descendant that would bruise the head of Satan, would come from Isaac. As you remember, Genesis 3:15 says, “‘And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’” Abraham fully expected God to raise Isaac from the dead.

The instructions also teach us another important lesson. Abraham said that he and Isaac were going to go to a place in the distance to worship. This meant that what they would be doing would be an act of worship. The word translated “worship” means *to bow down or to prostrate oneself*. John 4:20-24 says, “‘Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the *Jews*. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’” In these verses, Christ made it clear that worship is more than just the physical bowing of the knees. It is bowing our hearts in submission to God, which comes from our human spirit and is according to truth.

We go on to read, in Genesis 22:6-8, “So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ Then he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together.” The two young men stayed with the donkey while Abraham and Isaac continued on their way alone. Isaac carried the wood that had been split, while Abraham carried the fire that would set the wood on fire and the knife that would be used to kill Isaac.

They may have been very quiet as they walked toward Mount Moriah. Abraham was probably thinking about what he was going to do, while Isaac had a question about what was going to happen. Finally, the silence was broken as Isaac spoke to get the attention of his father. Isaac

said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham had offered many sacrifices through the years. Isaac had watched and probably participated by helping his father as he grew from a boy into a young man. As a result, he knew that to offer a burnt offering, there had to be a body to burn on the altar, which was normally a lamb. Isaac realized that they had everything they needed in order to offer a sacrifice except for a lamb. They had the wood. They had the fire to set the wood on fire. They would be able to find rocks where they were going to set up an altar. They even had a knife to kill the sacrifice. However, Isaac saw that they did not have a lamb. That was the most important thing because it would be the sacrifice. The answer that Abraham gave also gave an example of what God the Father would do in the future, as Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” God was going to provide the sacrifice that Abraham and Isaac would need later that day.

However, God was also going to provide His own Son as the sacrifice for sin for all mankind. God spoke about Abraham, in Genesis 20:7, and said, “Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are* yours.” In this verse, we see that God said Abraham was a prophet. We see that Christ fulfilled this prophecy in John 1:29 which says, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” Then, John 1:35-36 adds, “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’” Truly, Christ did provide Himself as our sacrifice to take away our sin. Then, Abraham and Isaac walked together to the very area where Christ would be that sacrifice for us.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that Abraham prophesied that Christ would provide Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. In this way, we can help them become equipped to share the message of Christ from many passages. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to teach about Christ, our sacrifice.